



TOLSTO

THE LIVING THOUGHTS OF

TOLSTOI

PRESENTED BY

STEFAN ZWEIG



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COUNT LEO TOLSTOI was born at his ancestral home of Yasnaya Polyana, Russia, on September 9, 1828. He came of an ancient and noble family. After a dissipated youth, he entered the army and fought through the Crimean War. It was while in the service that he began to write. At the end of the campaign Tolstoi found himself famous. His thoughts were taking a more and more serious and socialistic turn, which was given impetus by the progressive policy of Tzar Alexander II. In 1862 he made a happy marriage, and the next decade saw the publication of his two great novels, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. The rest of his life was spent on his estates doing good and living in a more and more simple manner. He was taken ill suddenly and died on November 20, 1910.

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STEFAN ZWEIG

ON 27TH JULY 1883, THE RUSSIAN WRITER TURGENIEV, next to Tolstoi the greatest of his nation, sent a moving letter to his friend Tolstoi at Yasnaya Polyana. He had been watching uneasily for several years while Tolstoi, whom he revered as the greatest writer of his people, turned from literature to lose himself in a "mystical ethic"; the very man who succeeded beyond all others in portraying Nature and man now had nothing on his table but theological treatises and a Bible. Turgenev was troubled by the fear that Tolstoi might, like Gogol, waste the decisive years of his creative prime in religious speculations meaningless to the world. In his last illness, therefore, he reached for his pen—or rather for his pencil, since his feeble hand could no longer hold a pen—and addressed to the most universal genius of his country a moving entreaty. It was, he wrote, the last and heartfelt request of a dying man. "Turn back to literature! That is your real gift. Great poet of our Russian land, hear my plea!"

To this touching deathbed cry (the letter breaks off in the middle, and Turgenev writes that his strength fails him) Tolstoi did not at once reply; and when at last he meant to answer, it was too late. Turgenev had died without knowing his wish had been heeded. But probably Tolstoi would have found it hard to answer his friend and

to yield ; for it was not vanity, not speculative curiosity which pushed him along the road of brooding and seeking God. On the contrary, he felt himself drawn without willing it, and in fact against his will. Tolstoi, an earth-bound man of this world, who had seen and felt the sensuous side of our earth as no one else had, had never before in all his life shown any inclination toward metaphysics. He had never been a thinker because of an elemental urge or for the pleasure of thinking ; it was the sensuous elements in life, not its meaning, which had chiefly occupied him in his epic art. He had not, therefore, turned deliberately to speculation, but had suddenly received a blow—a blow from somewhere out in the dark. It caused this strong, solid, healthy man, who had always strode upright and self-assured through life, to stagger and to seek a support with clutching hands.

This inward shock, which Tolstoi received when he was about fifty, has no name, and really no visible cause. Everything that one could suppose necessary for a happy life had come to him splendidly at that very period. Tolstoi was healthy, indeed stronger physically than any of his contemporaries ; he was intellectually vigorous, artistically fresh. As the master of a great estate he had no material worries ; he enjoyed reputation in the first place as a descendant of one of the most aristocratic noble families ; in the second, and still more, as the greatest writer in the Russian tongue, and a novelist famous throughout the globe. His family life was perfectly harmonious : he had wife and children, and no outward cause is to be traced for the slightest discontentment with life.

Then suddenly came this blow from the dark. Tolstoi could feel that something fearful had happened to him. "Life came to a standstill, and turned sinister." He felt all his limbs, as it were, asking himself what had happened—

why this sudden melancholy, these spells of terror, why nothing pleased or moved him any more. He felt only that work revolted him, that his wife became a stranger, his children left him indifferent. A disgust of life, *tædium vitæ*, possessed him, and he locked his sporting gun away lest in despair he should turn it upon himself. "At that time he first clearly realized [he describes his condition in a self-portrait, the Levine of *Anna Karenina*] that every living being, and he too, had nothing to look forward to but suffering, death and eternal decay; and so he had decided that he could not go on living like this; either he must find an explanation of life, or he would shoot himself."

To give a name to this inner turmoil which shaped Tolstoi into a speculator, a thinker, a life-teacher, would be senseless. Probably it was a mere climacteric condition, fear of old age, fear of death, a neurasthenic depression which turned into a passing spiritual paralysis. But it is in the nature of intellectual man, and above all of the artist, that he observes and tries to overcome his inward crises. At first only a nameless unrest began to possess Tolstoi. He wanted to know what had happened to him, and why life, which until then had seemed so sensible, so rich, so luxuriant, so varied, all at once became shallow and meaningless. And like his Ivan Ilyitch in the magnificent story when he feels death's talons for the first time and asks himself in alarm, "Perhaps I have not lived as I should have lived?" Tolstoi began day by day to examine himself on his life and on the meaning of life. He was a truth-seeker and philosopher not from native pleasure in speculation or from intellectual curiosity, but for self-preservation, from despair. His thinking, like Pascal's, is philosophy on the brink or out of the abyss, the *gouffre*; he searched life in fear of death, of nothingness. There is a strange document of Tolstoi's from that period, a sheet of paper

on which he listed the six "unknown questions" which he had to answer :

- (a) Why am I living ?
- (b) What is the cause for my existence and that of everyone else ?
- (c) What purpose has my existence or any other ?
- (d) What does the division which I feel within me into good and evil signify, and for what purpose is it there ?
- (e) How must I live ?
- (f) What is death—how can I save myself ?

The answering of these questions—how he and others were to live right—was, more than his literary work, the meaning and purpose of Tolstoi's life for the next thirty years.

The first stage of this search for the meaning of life results altogether logically. Despite certain nihilistic tendencies, which came out chiefly as his philosophy of history in *War and Peace*, Tolstoi had never been a sceptic. Outwardly and inwardly he had lived a life tranquil, free, epicurean and industrious. As a sudden convert to philosophy he began by turning to the authorities for their opinion of what men live for. He began to read philosophic books of every tendency, Schopenhauer and Plato, Kant and Pascal, to make them explain to him the meaning of life. But neither the philosophers nor the sciences gave him his answer. Tolstoi was displeased to find that the opinions of these wise men were only "clear and exact where they do not deal with the direct questions of life," but that they wholly evaded answering when asked for decisive advice and help ; and that none of them could explain the only thing he himself thought important : "What temporal, causal and spatial meaning has my life ?"

And so he turned—the second phase—from the philo-

sophers to the religions, there to seek consolation. Knowledge had denied itself to him, so he sought a faith, and prayed: "Give me a faith, O Lord, and let me help others to find it."

Tolstoi, that is, in this distracted stage, was not yet concerned for any universal doctrine; he was no initiator, no spiritual revolutionary. He wanted only to find a path and a goal for himself, the bemused individual, Leo Tolstoi, to reconquer his peace of soul. In his own words he wanted only to "save" himself from his own nihilism, to find a sense for the senselessness of existence. He did not yet even dream of proclaiming a new faith, and had no wish to depart from ancient, traditional, orthodox Christianity. On the contrary, he drew nearer to the Church again; when he was ten years old he had given up praying, going to church and preparing for communion. He made every effort to be wholly devout; he observed all the commandments and regulations of the Church, fasted, made pilgrimages to monasteries, kneeled before ikons, debated with bishops and priests and sectarians; and above all he studied the Gospels.

And now the same thing happened that always happens to restless seekers after truth. He found that the laws and commandments of the Gospels were neglected, and that what the Russian Orthodox Church preached as Christ's teaching was by no means the original, the "true" teaching of Christ. Here he discovered his first task: to explain the real sense of the Gospels, and to teach this Christianity to everyone "as a new concept of life, not as a mystical doctrine." The seeker had become a confessor, the confessor a prophet; and from prophet to zealot would be no great step. A personal despair began to take shape as an authoritarian doctrine, a reformation of all intellectual and moral thinking, and a new sociology besides. The original terrified question of a lone man, "What am I

living for, and how shall I live?" gradually turned to a general imperative for humanity, "Thus shall ye live!"

A thousand years' experience has given the Church a special sense for the danger inherent in any individual interpretation of the Gospels. The Church knows that anyone who begins to shape his life according to the letter of the Bible is bound to come in conflict with the official standards of the Church and the laws of the State. Tolstoi's very first book of principles, *My Confession*, was forbidden by the censors; his second, *My Faith*, by the Holy Synod; and much as the Church authorities hesitated to take the final step, out of respect for the great writer, at last they had to excommunicate Tolstoi. For Tolstoi, stirred to the depths of being, had begun to undermine all the foundations of Church, State and temporal order. Like the Waldensians, the Albigensians, the Anabaptists, the peasant preachers of the revolution, like everyone who tried to turn Christianity back to primitive Christianity and to live by word and letter of the Bible alone, Tolstoi was now unalterably on the way to becoming the most determined enemy of the State, the most passionate anarchist and anti-collectivist of modern times. His strength, his determination, his endurance and his unruly courage combined to carry him farther on the one hand than the most zealous reformers, like Luther and Calvin, and on the other hand, in sociological matters, farther than the most daring of anarchists, Stirner and his school. Before long modern civilization, contemporary society of the nineteenth century with all its justice and injustice, knew no more desperate and dangerous adversary than the greatest literary artist of its time. No one was a more effectively destructive critic of society than the man who had been the greatest artistic builder of his epoch.

But Church and State know the danger of these determined individualists, and know that even the purest ideo-

logical investigations gradually encroach upon the practical ; it is precisely the most honest and gifted among the reformers who cause the most confusion on this earth. Church and State know that primitive Christianity aims at a heavenly and not an earthly kingdom, that its commands from the State's point of view are partly subversive, denying government, because the devout are committed to place Christ above Cæsar, the heavenly above the earthly kingdom, and hence are bound to come in conflict with the duties of the loyal subject, with the law and structure of the State. But Tolstoi realized only gradually what a jungle of problems his searching and groping would lead him into. At first he thought he was attempting only to put his own private life in order, to give rest to his soul by suiting his personal attitude as closely as possible to the commands of the Gospel ; he intended nothing beyond living at peace with God and at peace with himself. But all unbeknownst the original question, "What was wrong in my life ?" grew to the general one, "What is wrong in all our lives ?" and thus became criticism of the age. He began to look around and discovered—which was not hard to do, particularly in the Russia of those days—the inequality or social conditions, the contrast between rich and poor, luxury and squalor ; beyond his own private mistakes he saw the general injustice of his upper-class fellows, and took it for his chief duty to repair this injustice with all his strength. Here, too, he began quite slowly ; the path was to take this implacably hard, uncannily sharp-eyed man on a far journey, but long before he grew into an anarchist and an elemental revolutionary he began as a philanthropist and liberal. A chance stay in Moscow in 1881 brought him close to the social question for the first time. In his book *What Are We to Do ?* he paints in staggering form this first encounter with the mass misery of a great city. Of course his clear eye had seen poverty in his

travels and walking trips a thousand times before, but this had been merely the individual poverty of villages and countryside, not the concentrated proletarian poverty of the industrial cities, poverty as a product of the age, the machined product of a machine civilization. Putting into practice his attitude toward the Bible, Tolstoi tried to mitigate the misery at first by gifts and contributions, by organizing philanthropy; but he soon saw the uselessness of every individual action, and "that money alone could do no good here in changing these people's tragic existences." A real change can be achieved only by a total reconstruction of the present social system. Thus he writes the fiery words of warning upon the wall of the times: "Between us, the rich and the poor, there is always a wall of false education, and before we can help the poor we must tear down this wall. I was driven to the conclusion that our wealth is the real cause of the common people's misery." Something is wrong with the present social structure: that was clear to him in the innermost recesses of his soul, and from that day onward Tolstoi had one single purpose—to instruct people, to warn them, to educate them into taking pains of their own free will to make good the fact that men are stratified into such wholly separate classes.

This was to be done of their own free will, and out of a pure moral insight. Here Tolstoianism begins, for Tolstoi aimed solely at a moral and not a violent revolution, which was to carry out this levelling immediately, thus sparing humanity the other, bloody rebellion. It was to be a revolution founded on conscience, a revolution through voluntary renunciation of their riches by the rich, of their inactivity by the idle, and an immediate new division of labour in the natural God-given sense that no one should have an excessive share in the labour of another, and that all should have the same needs. From now on he saw luxury as a poisonous blossom of this slough, which must

be uprooted for the sake of equality among men. Starting with this belief Tolstoi began his attack upon property a hundred times more bitterly than Karl Marx and Proudhon. "To-day possessions are the root of all evil. They cause the suffering of those who possess and of those who do not possess. And the danger of collision is unavoidable between those who have too much and those who live in poverty." All evil begins with property, and so long as the State still recognizes the principle of property, according to Tolstoi it is being both unchristian and unsocial, and (since for Tolstoi property represents debt to others) becomes one of, in fact the chief of, the guilty parties. "States and governments intrigue and go to war for property, now for the banks of the Rhine, the lands of Africa, now for China and the Balkans; bankers, traders, manufacturers and land-owners work, plan and torment themselves and others, only for property. Officials fight, cheat, oppress and suffer, all for the sake of property alone. Our courts, our police defend property. Our penal colonies and prisons, all the horrors of our so-called suppression of crime exist entirely to protect property."

In Tolstoi's understanding, therefore, there is but one mighty receiver of stolen goods, which shields all the injustice of present-day society, and this criminal is the State. In his opinion it was invented only to protect property; only for this purpose it set up its many-meshed system of force, with laws, prosecuting attorneys, prisons, judges, policemen, armies. But the most frightful and godless misdemeanour of the State Tolstoi believed was a new invention of his own century, universal military duty. To him nothing was such a provocation to the Christian man to betray the precepts of Christ and the commandments of the Gospels as his yielding to a State's order, allowing a tool of murder to be forced into his hand to kill some perfect stranger for the sake of a chance catchword—

Fatherland, Freedom, the State. These catchwords, Tolstoi keeps shouting, have no purpose but to protect property that does not belong to him, and forcibly to raise the idea of property to that of a higher moral law. Tolstoi wrote hundreds and hundreds of pages to emphasize the contradiction that in the present state of so-called civilization (in which he sees only a disguise of moral decline) people can be forced to butcher each other under the State's orders. It is against God's commandment and against the inner moral commandment, because thus "a man is brought against his will into a position repellent to his consciousness."

Thus Tolstoi—the gospel-seeker permanently turned radical anarchist—came to the conclusion that it was the duty of every intelligently moral person to resist the State if it demanded something "unchristian," i.e. military service, and this not by force but by non-resistance; in addition he must voluntarily give up every activity which depends on exploiting the work of others. Honourable men must think and act not patriotically but humanely; ceaselessly Tolstoi keeps pointing to the holiest right of the individual, that to decline things out of inner conviction although they be legally allowed or even required, to be refractory to every pronouncement of the State which they do not recognize as moral. Therefore he advises the Christian man to evade all arrangements and institutions as much as possible, not to appear in courts of law and to accept no offices, in order to keep his soul pure. Again and again Tolstoi encourages the individual not to be intimidated by the false, the anti-moral principle of force, even if it calls itself the force of law and order, for the State in its present form is of itself the defender, lawyer and bailiff of a latent injustice; and even anarchical crimes of individuals do not seem to Tolstoi so morally corrupting as the apparently well-ordered and humanely acting institutions of this arch-enemy. "Thieves, robbers,

murderers, swindlers are an example of what one must not do, and they inspire in men's minds a horror of wrongdoing. But men who commit acts of theft, of robbery, of murder, of chastisement, and gild them with some religious, scientific or liberal justification—who do it as land-owners, merchants or manufacturers—appeal to others to imitate their acts; they injure not only those who suffer under it, but thousands and millions of men whose morals they ruin by destroying the distinction between good and evil in those men's minds. . . . A single sentence of death carried out by men who are not under the influence of passion, by prosperous, educated persons with the encouragement and assistance of Christian clergymen, corrupts and brutalizes mankind more than hundreds and thousands of murders committed by uneducated working men, usually in an access of passion. . . . Every war, even the shortest, with all its accompanying losses, thefts, tolerated excesses, robberies, murders, with the supposed justification of its necessity and justice, with the praise and glorification of warlike deeds, with prayers for the flag and the Fatherland and the hypocritical anxiety for the wounded, corrupts men more in one year than millions of robberies, arsons and murders committed by individuals under the influence of passion in the course of hundreds of years." In other words, the State, the present social order, is the chief criminal, the true Antichrist, the personification of evil; and Tolstoi hurls in its teeth his grim *écrasez l'infâme*.

But if, as the organ of human society, the State is categorically *the* evil, the most striking disguise of Antichrist on earth, according to Tolstoi it is the natural duty of a Christian man to withdraw himself from both the demands and the temptations of this devilish spectre. The free Christian must be just as indifferent to Russia as a state as to France or England; he must think not in nations but on a universal human basis. Spiritually Tolstoi withdrew

from the State as he had from the Orthodox Church, declaring: "I cannot recognize states or nations, nor take part in quarrels between them, either by writing on the subject or by serving a single state. I can take no part in anything which rests on the difference between states, like custom houses, tax collection, the manufacture of explosives and arms, or any warlike preparations." The Christian man may not try to gain any advantage from State institutions; he must not try to grow rich under its protection or build a career by its favour. He must not go to court, must use no industrial products, must employ in his life nothing which comes from the work of others. He must possess no property, should avoid handling money, should not travel by railroad or bicycle, and should never vote or fill a public office. He must take no oath of allegiance, either to the Tsar or to any other power, because he owes obedience to no one but God and His word as it is uttered in the Gospels; and he must recognize no judge but his own conscience. The "Christian man" in Tolstoi's sense—actually we might always say instead "the pure anarchist"—must deny the State; he must live morally outside this immoral institution. Only this wholly passive, wholly negative, apathetic attitude, willingly accepting any suffering, distinguishes him fundamentally from the political revolutionary, who hates the State instead of ignoring it.

We must not, that is to say, overlook the antagonism of principle between Tolstoi and Lenin: just as strongly and decidedly as it condemns the present order of society, Tolstoianism rejects all violent resistance to the social order, because the revolution must fight evil with another evil, with violence. We may not fight the Devil with Beelzebub. Following his highest and deepest principle—"resist not evil by force"—Tolstoi's teaching calls passive, individual resistance the only permissible form of battle,

as against the active, the revolutionary way. The Christian man must suffer and swallow every injustice the State does him, without on that account ever recognizing the State. He must never use force to oppose force, because his own violence would be recognizing force and the principle of evil as permissible. A Tolstoian revolutionary never strikes, but allows himself to be beaten ; he seeks no position of external power, but will not be moved by any violence from his inward attitude of non-violence. He must not conquer "the power," "the State," but must discard them as something indifferent, to which inwardly he does not belong, and whose subject no one can compel his conscience to become.

Tolstoi draws the line very clearly, then, between his religious, primitive-Christian resistance to all authority, and the professional, activist class struggle. "When we encounter revolutionaries we often make the mistake of thinking that we and they have points of contact. They and we both cry, 'No state, no property, no injustice,' and much else. Yet there is a great difference : for the Christian no State exists, but these people wish to destroy the State. For the Christian there is no property ; they want to abolish it. For the Christian all men are equal ; they want to destroy inequality. The revolutionaries struggle with the government from outside, but Christianity does not struggle at all ; it destroys the foundations of the State from within." If ever-increasing thousands, each by his own personal conviction, refuse to be subjugated, preferring to be sent to Siberia, flogged and thrown into prison, in Tolstoi's opinion their heroic passivity will accomplish more than the violent solidarity of the revolutionists. For this reason alone, by strict observance of non-resistance, the religious revolution can become more dangerous and destructive to the State in the long run than uprisings and secret societies ; to change the order of the

world, men themselves must be changed. What Tolstoi dreams of, that is, is revolution from within, revolution not of the mailed fist but of a conscience unshakeable and ready for any suffering—a revolution of souls, not of fists.

This "anti-state doctrine" of Tolstoi's—we are reminded of Luther's tract on *The Freedom of the Christian Man*—is in itself splendidly direct and forceful. The flaw within the system appears only when Tolstoi attempts to turn his demand for self-determination into a positive theory of the State. After all, man does not live in a vacuum outside his century; where millions of individuals are crowded together at many levels, and talents and occupations intersect in daily life, some definite regulation of life must be established, even if we cut out that criminal, the State; and a "right" must thus be opposed to the previous "wrong," good opposed to evil. And now for the thousandth time in human history we discover how much harder sociological upbuilding is than criticism. From the moment when Tolstoi turns from diagnosis to therapy, when instead of denying and condemning the present social order he makes proposals for a future better human commonwealth, his concepts become altogether nebulous, his ideas confused. For instead of a stable, uniform state structure with authorities and laws and executive organs, Tolstoi recommends as a means of cementing all contradictory interests—this we are astonished to hear from a man who searched every depth of the human soul as almost no one ever has—simply "love," "brotherhood," "faith," "life in Christ." According to Tolstoi the vast abyss existing to-day between the property-owning classes, spoiled children of culture, and the pauper classes can be spanned only if the property-owning classes voluntarily give up their privileges, and cease to make such great demands upon life. Let the rich man give up

his wealth, the intellectual his arrogance ; let the artist create his works with a view solely to intelligibility for the masses, let everyone live wholly by his own work, receiving no more for it than he needs for this primitive form of life. This is Tolstoi's central idea : social levelling must be accomplished not from below, as the revolutionists demand, by forcibly taking all property from the owners, but from above, by a spontaneous concession from the propertied classes.

Tolstoi realized clearly that such a descent to primitive peasant forms of life would destroy many of our cultural values. In order to make us the more easily resigned to this he wrote a pamphlet on art, depreciating the achievements of our greatest artists, even Shakespeare and Beethoven, because they were not sufficiently intelligible to the people. He thought nothing more important than to destroy that fearful cleavage between poor and rich which poisons the world to-day. For when once equal needs or rather simplicity of needs have restored unity among men, in his opinion the evil instincts of envy and hatred can find no further objects of attack. It will be superfluous to create special authorities and to use force in maintaining them. The real Kingdom of God on earth will begin as soon as all social exaltations and subordinations are done away with, and people have once more learned to form a single brotherly community.

So attractive was this thesis in a land of extreme social contrasts, so powerful Tolstoi's authority in his time, that they made many people wish to realize this new Tolstoian theory of society in practice. In a few places there were people who tried to put it to the test, founding colonies on the principle of non-property and non-violence. But, catastrophically, these attempts ended in disappointment ; and Tolstoi did not succeed in establishing the basic principles of Tolstoianism even in his own house and family.

For years he strove to harmonize his private life with his theories ; he gave up his beloved hunting so as not to kill animals, so far as possible he avoided using the railroad, he turned over the income from his writings to his family or to charitable purposes, he refused to eat meat because it required the forcible death of living creatures. He ploughed in the fields himself, went about in a coarse peasant coat, and nailed the soles to his shoes with his own hands.

But he could not conquer the resistance of reality to his ideas, and—profoundest tragedy of his life—least of all in his own family, among his nearest and dearest. His wife became estranged, his children could not understand why they in particular must be brought up like milkmaids and peasant boys for the sake of their father's theories ; his secretaries and translators brawled like drunken coachmen over the " property " in Tolstoi's writings. Not a single soul around him accepted the life of this splendid pagan as a truly Christian one, and he himself knew in the end, as his diary shows, that his intellectuality and his pride unsuited him more than anyone to fulfil the imperiously propagated ideal. We are shaken to read the question in his diary : " Leo Tolstoi, are you living according to your doctrine ? " and then the bitter answer : " No. I am dying of shame. I am guilty, and deserving of contempt. " And the eighty-three-year-old man, feeling death come upon him, flees out of his house by night, and dies in a little railroad station, lonely and disappointed in his holiest purpose.

Nevertheless it would be cheap afterthought to observe haughtily that Tolstoi's system of social and religious thought could no more be realized than the utopian state of Plato or the social order of Jean Jacques Rousseau. And it is likewise childishly easy to discover that his theoretical writings have only occasionally the brilliance and the convincing quality of his fiction ; it is sufficient to compare

(as this selection attempts to do) one or two of his popular tales, in which he treats the same ideas, with the screaming zealotry of his theoretical writings in order to feel the difference. In the popular tales, the finest of which might be in the Bible along with the legends of Job and Ruth, he is concise, creative, ingenious; while his philosophy often becomes discursive and emphatic, besides being often disagreeable through its dictatorial pretensions, as if he, Leo Tolstoi, had been the first man in eighteen hundred and eighty years to read the Gospels "aright," and none else before him had critically thought through the problems of human society. Often we are inclined to echo Turgenev's plea, begging Tolstoi to return from the discursive tracts *What Are We to Do?*, *The Kingdom of God is in Ourselves*, and his fruitless Bible exegetics to the realm of artistic creation, where he was not one mere speculator among many, but the undisputed master, the noblest protrayer of his people, nay of his century. Nevertheless it would be unjust not to recognize the powerful, even the epoch-making effects which the world owes to Tolstoi's theory of life; and it is definitely no exaggeration to say that not one of his contemporary thinkers, not even Karl Marx or Nietzsche, produced equal emotion in millions and millions of people—although in tendency their effects varied altogether. As the Rivers of Paradise flow from the centre in opposite directions, so Tolstoi's ideas, strangely, fertilized the most hostile intellectual movements of the twentieth century. Probably nothing could have been more foreign to him than systematic Bolshevism, which began by demanding the crushing of its enemy (while he demanded conciliation through love); which gave to the State—the Beelzebub of Tolstoi—an undreamt-of authority over the individual; and whose centralization of all power, whose atheism, whose will to rouse the masses from their sluggishness affirmed the very opposite

from his *Thus Shall Ye Live*. Nevertheless, none of the nineteenth-century Russian revolutionists smoothed the path so much for Lenin and Trotsky as this anti-revolutionary count, who was the first to defy the Tsar, and who, pursued by the ban of the Holy Synod, had left the Church; who had shattered all existing authority with hammer blows, and who demanded social reconciliation as the necessary condition for a new and better world. His works, forbidden by the censors, were copied by hand, and reached a hundred thousand readers, making common knowledge of his demand for the abolition of property at a time when the wildest of the social-revolutionists were still modestly satisfied with liberalistic palliations and reforms. No book and no man had such a share in making Russia radical as Tolstoi's radicalism in thinking; no one so encouraged his countrymen not to shrink from any piece of daring. Despite all his inward opposition he deserves a monument on Red Square. For as Rousseau was the ancestor of the French Revolution, so Tolstoi (probably quite as much against his will as that other arch-individualist) was the "Prodromos," the true ancestor of the Russian world revolution.

But at the same time, strangely enough, his doctrine had the exact opposite effect on other millions of men. At the other end of the world, in India, the non-Christian Gandhi took over the apostolate of primitive Christianity from Tolstoi's teaching. While the Russians appropriated the radical quality, Gandhi accepted the doctrine of non-resistance, and was the first with his three hundred million people to organize the technique of passive resistance. In this struggle, too, he used all the other bloodless weapons which Tolstoi recommended as the only permissible ones: desertion of industry, home labour, the winning of inward and political independence by extreme reduction of outward needs. Hundreds of millions, that is, some in Russia's active

revolution and some in India's passive one, have appropriated ideas of this reactionary revolutionist or rebellious reactionary—even though they did so in a way which their creator would have abominated or denied.

But in themselves ideas have no tendency. Not until the times seize them are they carried away like a sail before the wind. Ideas in themselves are only motor forces, producing motion without knowing the goal of this motion, this excitement. It makes no difference how large a part of them may be open to attack; since Tolstoi's ideas undoubtedly made history on a world scale, his theoretical writings with their contradictions belong once and for all with the most important intellectual and social constituents of our times. Even to-day they still have much to give to the individual reader. The fighter for pacifism and for peaceable understanding among men will hardly find so rich and systematic an arsenal of weapons against war. The man whose soul revolts at the now usual deification of the State as the only valid goal of our thinking and striving, and who refuses to take part in this idolatry of complete sacrifice will find himself wonderfully strengthened by this "Fuoruscito" of all Fatherland-worship. Every statesman, every sociologist will discover prophetic foresight in his fundamental criticism of our age; every artist must be spurred on by the example of this mighty poet, who tormented his soul that he might think for all, and might battle injustice on earth with the power of his words. It is always an exquisite delight when we can regard a towering artist as a moral example also, as a man who, instead of ruling by his celebrity, makes himself the servant of humanity, and in his struggle for a true ethos submits to only one out of all the authorities on earth—his own incorruptible conscience.

Stefan Zweig has selected and arranged the
essence of Tolstoi's thought from

MY CONFESSION
THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU
WAR AND PEACE
NICHOLAS BIGSTICK
THREE PARABLES
KING ASSAR HADON
WHAT MEN LIVE BY

THE WORKS OF
LEO NIKOLAYEVITCH TOLSTOI
(1828-1910)

Childhood (1852), Boyhood (1854), Youth (1855-1857)
Three Deaths (1859)
The Cossacks (1863)
War and Peace (1864-1869)
Anna Karenina (1873-1877)
My Confession (1879-1882)
What Men Live By and Other Stories (1881)
The Power of Darkness (1885)
Kreutzer Sonata (1890)
The Kingdom of God is within You (1893)
What is Art? (1898)
Resurrection (1899)
Slavery of Our Times and Other Essays (1899)

TOLSTOI'S WAY TO HIS INNER SELF¹

I WAS CHRISTENED AND EDUCATED IN THE ORTHODOX Christian Faith ; I was taught it in my childhood, and in my boyhood and youth. Nevertheless, when, at eighteen years of age, I left the university in the second year, I had discarded all belief in anything I had been taught.

The belief instilled from childhood in me, as in so many others, gradually disappeared, but with this difference ; that as from fifteen years of age I had begun to read philosophical works, I became very early conscious of my own disbelief. From the age of sixteen I ceased to pray, and ceased, from conviction, to attend the services of the Church and to fast. I no longer accepted the faith of my childhood, but I believed in something, though I could not exactly explain in what. I believed in a God—or rather, I did not deny the existence of a God—but what kind of God I could not have told ; I denied neither Christ nor His teaching, but in what that teaching consisted I could not have said.

Now, when I think over that time, I see clearly that all the faith I had, the only belief which, apart from mere animal instinct, swayed my life, was a belief in the possibility of perfection, though what it was in itself, or what would be its results, I could not have said.

I tried to reach intellectual perfection ; my studies were extended in every direction of which my life afforded me a chance ; I strove to strengthen my will, forming for myself rules which I forced myself to follow ; I did my best to develop my physical powers by every exercise

¹ From *My Confession*.

calculated to give strength and agility, and by way of accustoming myself to patient endurance ; I subjected myself to many voluntary hardships and trials of privation. All this I looked on as necessary to obtain the perfection at which I aimed.

At first, of course, moral perfection seemed to me the main end, but I soon found myself contemplating in its stead an ideal of general perfectibility ; in other words, I wished to be better, not in my own eyes nor in God's, but in the sight of other men. And very soon this striving to be better in the sight of men feeling again changed into another—the desire to have more power than others, to secure for myself a greater share of fame, of social distinction and of wealth. . . .

At some future time I may relate the story of my life, and dwell in detail on the pathetic and instructive incidents of my youth. I think that many and many have had the same experiences as I did. I desired with all my soul to be good ; but I was young, I had passions, and I was alone, wholly alone, in my search after goodness. Every time I tried to express the longings of my heart to be morally good, I was met with contempt and ridicule, but as soon as I gave way to low passions, I was praised and encouraged.

Ambition, love of power, love of gain, lechery, pride, anger, vengeance, were held in high esteem.

As I gave way to these passions, I became like my elders, and I felt that they were satisfied with me. A kind-hearted aunt of mine, a really good woman with whom I lived, used to say to me that there was one thing above all others which she wished for me—an intrigue with a married woman : “ *Rien ne forme un jeune homme, comme une liaison avec une femme comme il faut.* ” Another of her wishes for my happiness was that I should become an adjutant, and, if possible, to the Emperor ; the greatest piece of good fortune of all she thought would be that I should find a

very wealthy bride, who would bring me as her dowry as many slaves as could be.

I cannot now recall those years without a painful feeling of horror and loathing.

I put men to death in war, I fought duels to slay others, I lost at cards, wasted my substance wrung from the sweat of peasants, punished the latter cruelly, rioted with loose women, and deceived men. Lying, robbery, adultery of all kinds, drunkenness, violence, murder. . . . There was not one crime which I did not commit, and yet I was not the less considered by my equals a comparatively moral man.

Such was my life during ten years.

During that time I began to write, out of vanity, love of gain and pride. I followed as a writer the same path which I had chosen as a man. In order to obtain the fame and the money for which I wrote, I was obliged to hide what was good and to say what was evil. Thus I did. How often while writing have I cudgelled my brains to conceal under the mask of indifference or pleasantry those yearnings for something better which formed the real thought of my life. I succeeded in this also, and was praised.

At twenty-six years of age, on the close of the war, I came to Petersburg and made the acquaintance of the authors of the day. I met with a hearty reception and much flattery.

Before I had time to look around, the prejudices and views of life common to the writers of the class with which I associated became my own, and completely put an end to all my former struggles after a better life. These views, under the influence of the dissipation of my life, supplied a theory which justified it.

The view of life taken by these my fellow-writers was that life is a development, and the principal part in that

development is played by ourselves, the thinkers, while among the thinkers the chief influence is again due to us, the artists, the poets. Our vocation is to teach men.

In order to avoid answering the very natural question, "What do I know, and what can I teach?" the theory in question is made to contain the formula that it is not necessary to know this, but that the artist and the poet teach unconsciously.

I was myself considered a marvellous artist and poet, and I therefore very naturally adopted this theory. I, an artist and poet, wrote and taught I knew not what. For doing this I received money; I kept a splendid table, had excellent lodgings, women, society; I had fame. Naturally what I taught was very good.

When I now think over that time, and remember my own state of mind and that of these men (a state of mind common enough among thousands still), it seems to me pitiful, terrible and ridiculous; it excites the feelings which overcome us as we pass through a madhouse.

We were all then convinced that it behooved us to speak, to write, and to print as fast as we could, as much as we could, and that on this depended the welfare of the human race. And thousands of us wrote, printed and taught, and all the while confuted and abused one another. Quite unconscious that we ourselves knew nothing, that to the simplest of all problems in life—what is right and what is wrong—we had no answer, we all went on talking together without one to listen, at times abetting and praising one another on condition that we were abetted and praised in turn, and again turning upon one another in wrath—in short, we reproduced the scenes in a madhouse.

Thousands of labourers worked day and night, to the limit of their strength, setting up the type and printing millions of words to be spread by the post all over Russia, and still we continued to teach, unable to teach enough,

angrily complaining the while that we were not much listened to.

A strange state of things indeed, but now it is comprehensible to me. The real motive that inspired all our reasoning was the desire for money and praise, to obtain which we knew of no other means than writing books and newspapers, and so we did. But in order to hold fast to the conviction that while thus uselessly employed we were very important men, it was necessary to justify our occupation to ourselves by another theory, and the following was the one we adopted :

Whatever is, is right ; everything that is, is due to development ; development comes from civilization ; the measure of civilization is the diffusion of books and newspapers ; we are paid and honoured for the books and newspapers which we write, and we are therefore the most useful and best of men !

This reasoning might have been conclusive had we all been agreed ; but, as for every opinion expressed by one of us there instantly appeared from another one diametrically opposite, we had to hesitate before accepting it. But we did not notice this ; we received money, and were praised by those of our party, consequently we—each one of us—considered that we were in the right.

It is now clear to me that between ourselves and the inhabitants of a madhouse there was no difference : at the time I only vaguely suspected this, and, like all madmen, thought all were mad except myself. . . .

I lived in this senseless manner another six years, up to the time of my marriage. During this time I went abroad. My life in Europe, and my acquaintance with many eminent and learned foreigners, confirmed my belief in the doctrine of general perfectibility, as I found the same theory prevailed among them. This belief took the form which is common among most of the cultivated men of our day.

This belief was expressed in the word "progress." It then appeared to me this word had a real meaning. I did not as yet understand that, tormented like every other man by the question, "How was I to live better?" when I answered that I must live for progress, I was only repeating the answer of a man carried away in a boat by the waves and the wind, who to the one important question for him, "Where are we to steer?" should answer, "We are being carried somewhere."

I did not see this then; only at rare intervals my feelings, and not my reason, were roused against the common superstition of our age, which leads men to ignore their own ignorance of life.

Thus, during my stay in Paris, the sight of a public execution revealed to me the weakness of my superstitious belief in progress. When I saw the head divided from the body, and heard the sound with which they fell separately into the box, I understood, not with my reason, but with my whole being, that no theory of the wisdom of all established things, nor of progress, could justify such an act; and that if all the men in the world from the day of creation, by whatever theory, had found this thing necessary, I knew it was not necessary, it was a bad thing, and that therefore I must judge of what was right and necessary, not by what men said and did, not by progress, but what I felt to be true in my heart.

On my return from abroad I settled in the country, and occupied myself with the organization of schools for the peasantry. Accepting the office of arbitrator, I began to teach the uneducated people in the schools, and the educated classes in the journal which I began to publish. Things seemed to be going on well, but I felt that my mind was not in a normal state and that a change was near. I might even then, perhaps, have come to that state of despair to which I was brought fifteen years later, if it had not

been for a new experience in life which promised me safety—family life.

For a year I was occupied with arbitration, with the schools, and with my newspaper, and got so involved that I was harassed to death; the struggle over the arbitration was so hard for me, my activity in the schools was so dubious to me, my shuffling in the newspaper became so repugnant to me, consisting as it did in for ever the same thing—in the desire to teach all people and to hide the fact that I did not know how or what to teach—that I fell ill, more with a mental than physical sickness, gave up everything, and started for the steppes to the Bashkirs to breathe a fresher air, to drink kumiss, and live an animal life.

After I returned I married. The new circumstances of a happy family life completely led me away from the search after the meaning of life as a whole. My life was concentrated at this time in my family, my wife and children, and consequently in the care for increasing the means of life. The effort to effect my own individual perfection, already replaced by the striving after general progress, was again changed into an effort to secure the particular happiness of my family.

In this way fifteen years passed. In my writings I taught what for me was the only truth—that the object of life should be our highest happiness and that of our family.

Thus I lived; but, five years ago, a strange state of mind began to grow upon me: I had moments of perplexity, of a stoppage, as it were, of life, as if I did not know how I was to live, what I was to do, and I began to wander, and was a victim to low spirits. But this passed, and I continued to live as before. Later, these periods of perplexity began to return more and more frequently, and invariably took the same form. These stoppages of

life always presented themselves to me with the same questions : "Why?" and "What after?"

At first it seemed to me that these were aimless, unmeaning questions ; it seemed to me that all they asked about was well known, and that if at any time when I wished to find answers to them I could do so without much trouble—that just at that time I could not be bothered with this, but whenever I should stop to think them over I should find an answer. But these questions presented themselves to my mind with ever-increasing frequency, demanding an answer with still greater and greater persistence, and like dots grouped themselves into one black spot.

It was with me as it happens in the case of every mortal internal ailment—at first appear the insignificant symptoms of indisposition, disregarded by the patient ; then these symptoms are repeated more and more frequently, till they merge in uninterrupted suffering. The sufferings increase, and the patient, before he has time to look around, is confronted with the fact that what he took for a mere indisposition has become more important to him than anything else on earth, that it is death !

This is exactly what happened to me. I became aware that this was not a chance indisposition, but something very serious, and that if all these questions continued to recur, I should have to find an answer to them. And I tried to answer them. The questions seemed so foolish, so simple, so childish ; but no sooner had I taken hold of them and attempted to decide them than I was convinced, first, that they were neither childish nor silly, but were concerned with the deepest problems of life ; and, in the second place, that I could not decide them—could not decide them, however I put my mind upon them.

Before occupying myself with my Samara estate, with the education of my son, with the writing of books, I was bound to know why I did these things. As long as I do

not know the reason "why" I cannot do anything, I cannot live. While thinking about the management of my household and estate, which in these days occupied much of my time, suddenly this question came into my head :

"Well and good, I have now six thousand desyatins in the government of Samara, and three hundred horses—what then ?"

I was perfectly disconcerted, and knew not what to think. Another time, dwelling on the thought of how I should educate my children, I ask myself "*Why?*" Again, when considering by what means the well-being of the people might best be promoted, I suddenly exclaimed, "But what concern have I with it?" When I thought of the fame which my works were gaining me, I said to myself :

"Well, what if I should be more famous than Gogol, Pushkin, Shakespeare, Molière—than all the writers of the world—well, and what then ?" . . .

I could find no reply. Such questions will not wait : they demand an immediate answer ; without one it is impossible to live ; but answer there was none.

I felt that the ground on which I stood was crumbling, that there was nothing for me to stand on, that what I had been living for was nothing, that I had no reason for living. . . .

My life had come to a stop. I was able to breathe, to eat, to drink, to sleep, and I could not help breathing, eating, drinking, sleeping ; but there was no real life in me because I had not a single desire, the fulfilment of which I could feel to be reasonable. If I wished for anything, I knew beforehand that, were I to satisfy the wish, or were I not to satisfy it, nothing would come of it. Had a fairy appeared and offered me all I desired, I should not have known what to say. If I had, in moments of excitement, I

will not say wishes, but the habits of former wishes, at calmer moments I knew that it was a delusion, that I really wished for nothing. I could not even wish to know the truth, because I guessed in what it consisted.

The truth was, that life was meaningless. Every day of life, every step in it, brought me, as it were, nearer the precipice, and I saw clearly that before me there was nothing but ruin. And to stop was impossible; to go back was impossible; and it was impossible to shut my eyes so as not to see that there was nothing before me but suffering and actual death, absolute annihilation.

Thus I, a healthy and a happy man, was brought to feel that I could live no longer—some irresistible force was dragging me onward to escape from life. I do not mean that I wanted to kill myself.

The force that drew me away from life was stronger, fuller and more universal than any wish; it was a force like that of my previous attachment to life, only in a contrary direction. With all my force I struggled away from life. The idea of suicide came as naturally to me as formerly that of bettering my life. This thought was so attractive to me that I was compelled to practise upon myself a species of self-deception in order to avoid carrying it out too hastily. I was unwilling to act hastily, only because I wanted to employ all my powers in clearing away the confusion of my thoughts; if I should not clear them away, I could at any time kill myself. And here was I, a man fortunately situated, hiding away a cord, to avoid being tempted to hang myself by it to the transom between the closets of my room, where I undressed alone every evening; and I ceased to go hunting with a gun because it offered too easy a way of getting rid of life. I knew not what I wanted; I was afraid of life; I struggled to get away from it, and yet there *was* something I hoped for from it.

Such was the condition I had to come to, at a time when all the circumstances of my life were pre-eminently happy ones, and when I had not reached my fiftieth year. I had a good, loving and beloved wife, good children, and a large estate, which, without much trouble on my part, was growing and increasing ; I was more than ever respected by my friends and acquaintances ; I was praised by strangers, and could lay claim to having made my name famous without much self-deception. Moreover, I was not mad or in an unhealthy mental state ; on the contrary, I enjoyed a mental and physical strength which I have seldom found in men of my class and pursuits ; I could keep up with a peasant in mowing, and could continue mental labour for eight or ten hours at a stretch, without any evil consequences. And in this state of things it came to this—that I could not live, and as I feared death I was obliged to employ ruses against myself so as not to put an end to my life.

The mental state in which I then was seemed to me summed up in the following : My life was a foolish and wicked joke played on me by someone. Notwithstanding the fact that I did not recognize a " Some one " who may have created me, this conclusion that someone had wickedly and foolishly made a joke of me in bringing me into the world seemed to me the most natural of all conclusions.

It was this that was terrible ! And to get free from this horror I was ready to kill myself. I felt a horror of what awaited me ; I knew that this horror was more horrible than the position itself, but I could not patiently await the end. However persuasive the argument might be that all the same a blood-vessel in the heart would be ruptured or something would burst and all be over, still I could not patiently await the end. The horror of the darkness was too great to bear, and I longed to free myself from it as speedily as possible by a rope or a pistol ball. This

was the feeling that, above all, drew me to think of suicide. . . .

"But is it possible that I have overlooked something, that I have failed to understand something," I asked myself; "may it not be that this state of despair is common among men?"

And in every branch of human knowledge I sought an explanation of the questions that tormented me; I sought that explanation painfully and long, not out of mere curiosity; I did not seek it indolently, but painfully, obstinately, day and night; I sought it as a perishing man seeks safety, and I found nothing.

I sought it in all branches of knowledge, and not only did I fail, but, moreover, I convinced myself that all those who had searched like myself had likewise found nothing; and not only had found nothing, but had come, as I had, to the despairing conviction, that the only absolute knowledge man can possess is this—that life is without meaning.

I sought in all directions, and thanks to a life spent in study, and also to my connections with the learned world, the most accomplished scholars in all the various branches of knowledge were accessible to me, and they did not refuse to open to me all the sources of knowledge both in books and through personal intercourse. I knew all that learning could answer to the question, "What is life?" . . .

I had lost my way in the forest of human knowledge, in the light of the mathematical and experimental sciences which opened out for me clear horizons where there could be no house, and in the darkness of philosophy, plunging me into a greater gloom with every step I took, until I was at last persuaded that there was, and could be, no issue.

* * *

When I followed what seemed the bright light of learning, I saw that I had only turned aside from the real question.

However alluring and clear were the horizons unfolded before me, however alluring it was to plunge into the infinity of these kinds of knowledge, I saw that the clearer they were the less did I need them, the less did they give me an answer to my question.

Thus my wanderings over the fields of knowledge not only failed to cure me of my despair, but increased it. One branch of knowledge gave no answer at all to the problem of life; another gave a direct answer which confirmed my despair, and showed that the state to which I had come was not the result of my going astray, of any mental disorder, but, on the contrary, it assured me that I was thinking rightly, that I was in agreement with the conclusions of the most powerful intellects among mankind.

I could not be deceived. All is vanity. A misfortune to be born. Death is better than life; life's burden must be got rid of.

My position was terrible. I knew that from the knowledge which reason has given man, I could get nothing but the denial of life, and from faith nothing but the denial of reason, which last was even more impossible than the denial of life. By the knowledge founded on reason it was proved that life is an evil and that men know it to be so, that men may cease to live if they will, but that they have lived and they go on living—I myself lived on, though I had long known that life was meaningless and evil. If I went by faith it resulted that, in order to understand the meaning of life, I should have to abandon reason, the very part of me that required a meaning in life! . . .

When I had come to this conclusion, I understood that it was useless to seek an answer to my question from knowledge founded on reason, and that the answer given by this form of knowledge is only an indication that no answer can be obtained till the question is put differently—

till the question be made to include the relation between the finite and the infinite. I also understood that, however unreasonable and monstrous the answers given by faith, they have the advantage of bringing into every question the relation of the finite to the infinite, without which there can be no answer.

However I may put the question, How am I to live? the answer is, "By the law of God."

Will anything real and positive come of my life, and what?

Eternal torment, or eternal bliss.

What meaning is there not to be destroyed by death?

Union with an infinite God, paradise.

In this way I was compelled to admit that, besides the reasoning knowledge, which I once thought the only true knowledge, there was in every living man another kind of knowledge, an unreasoning one—faith—which gives a possibility of living. . . .

I was now ready to accept any faith that did not require of me a direct denial of reason, for that would be to act a lie; and I studied Buddhism and Mohammedanism in their books, and especially also Christianity, both in its writings and in the lives of its professors around me.

I naturally turned my attention at first to the believers in my own immediate circle, to learned men, to orthodox divines, to the older monks, to the orthodox divines of a new shade of doctrine, the so-called New Christians, who preach salvation through faith in a Redeemer. I seized upon these believers, and asked them what they believed in, and what for them gave a meaning to life.

No arguments were able to convince me of the sincerity of the faith of these men. Only actions, proving their conception of life to have destroyed the fear of poverty, illness and death, so strong in myself, could have con-

vinced me, and such actions I could not see among the various believers of our class. Such actions I saw, indeed, among the open infidels of my own class in life, but never among the so-called believers of our class.

I understood, then, that the faith of these men was not the faith which I sought; that it was no faith at all, but only one of the Epicurean consolations of life. I understood that this faith, if it could not really console, could at least soothe the repentant mind of a Solomon on his death-bed; but that it could not serve the enormous majority of mankind, who are born, not to be comforted by the labours of others, but to create a life for themselves. For mankind to live, for it to continue to live and be conscious of the meaning of its life, all these milliards must have another and a true conception of faith. It was not, then; the fact that Solomon, Schopenhauer and I had not killed ourselves, which convinced me that faith existed, but the fact that these milliards have lived and are now living, carrying along with them on the impulse of their life both Solomon and ourselves.

I began to draw nearer to the believers, among the poor, the simple and the ignorant, the pilgrims, the monks, the raskolniks and the peasants. The doctrines of these men of the people, like those of the pretended believers of my own class, were Christian. Here also much that was superstitious was mingled with the truths of Christianity, but with this difference, that the superstition of the believers of our class was entirely unnecessary to them, and never influenced their lives beyond serving as a kind of Epicurean distraction; while the superstition of the believing labouring class was so interwoven with their lives that it was impossible to conceive them without it—it was a necessary condition of their living at all. The whole life of the believers of our class was in flat contradiction with their faith, and the whole life of the believers of the people was

a confirmation of the meaning of life which their faith gave them.

Thus I began to study the lives and the doctrines of the people, and the more I studied the more I became convinced that a true faith was among them, that their faith was for them a necessary thing, and alone gave them a meaning in life and a possibility of living. In direct opposition to what I saw in our circle—where life without faith was possible, and where not one in a thousand professed himself a believer—amongst the people there was not a single unbeliever in a thousand. In direct opposition to what I saw in our circle—where a whole life is spent in idleness, amusement, and dissatisfaction with life—I saw among the people whole lives passed in heavy labour and unrepining content. In direct opposition to what I saw in our circle—men resisting and indignant with the privations and sufferings of their lot—the people unhesitatingly and unresistingly accepting illness and sorrow, in the quiet and firm conviction that all these must be and could not be otherwise, and that all was for the best. In contradiction to the theory that the less learned we are the less we understand the meaning of life, and see in our sufferings and death but an evil joke, these men of the people live, suffer, and draw near to death, in quiet confidence and oftenest with joy. In contradiction to the fact that an easy death, without terror or despair, is a rare exception in our class, a death which is uneasy, rebellious and sorrowful is among the people the rarest exception of all.

These people, deprived of all that for us and for Solomon makes the only good in life, and experiencing at the same time the highest happiness, form the great majority of mankind. I looked more widely around me, I studied the lives of the past and contemporary masses of humanity, and I saw that, not two or three, or ten, but hundreds, thousands, millions had so understood the meaning of life

that they were able both to live and to die. All these men, infinitely divided by manners, powers of mind, education and position, all alike in opposition to my ignorance, were well acquainted with the meaning of life and of death, quietly laboured, endured privation and suffering, lived and died, and saw in all this, not a vain, but a good thing.

I began to grow attached to these men. The more I learned of their lives, the lives of the living and of the dead of whom I read and heard, the more I liked them, and the easier I felt it so to live. I lived in this way during two years, and then there came a change which had long been preparing in me, and the symptoms of which I had always dimly felt: the life of our circle of rich and learned men, not only became repulsive, but lost all meaning. All our actions, our reasoning, our science and art, all appeared to me in a new light. I understood that it was all child's play, that it was useless to seek a meaning in it. The life of the working-classes, of the whole of mankind, of those that create life, appeared to me in its true significance. I understood that this was life itself, and that the meaning given to this life was true, and I accepted it. . . .

When I remembered how these very doctrines had repelled me, how senseless they had seemed when professed by men whose lives were spent in opposition to them, and how these same doctrines had attracted me and seemed reasonable when I saw men living in accordance with them, I understood why I had once rejected them and thought them unmeaning, why I now adopted them and thought them full of meaning. I understood that I had erred, and how I had erred. I had erred, not so much through having thought incorrectly, as through having lived ill. I understood that the truth had been hidden from me, not so much because I had erred in my reasoning, as because I had led the exceptional life of an epicure bent on satisfying the lusts of the flesh. I understood that my

question, "What is my life," and the answer, "An evil," were in accordance with the truth of things. The mistake lay in my having applied to life in general an answer which only concerned myself. I had asked what my own life was, and the answer was "An evil and absurdity." Exactly so, my life—a life of indulgence, of sensuality—was an absurdity and an evil; and the answer, "Life is meaningless and evil," therefore, referred only to my own life, and not to human life in general.

I understood the truth which I afterwards found in the Gospel: "That men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For every man that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

I understood that, for the meaning of life to be understood, it was necessary first that life should be something more than evil and meaningless, and afterwards that there should be the light of reason to understand it. I understood why I had so long been circling round this self-evident truth without apprehending it, and that if we would think and speak of the life of mankind, we must think and speak of that life as a whole, and not merely of the life of certain parasites on it.

This truth was always a truth, as $2 \times 2 = 4$, but I had not accepted it, because, besides acknowledging $2 \times 2 = 4$, I should have been obliged to acknowledge that I was evil. It was of more importance to me to feel that I was good, more binding on me, than to believe $2 \times 2 = 4$. I loved good men, I hated myself, and I accepted truth. Now it was all clear to me. . . .

My conviction of the error into which all knowledge based on reason must fall assisted me in freeing myself from the seductions of idle reasoning. The conviction that a knowledge of truth can be gained only by living led me to doubt the justness of my own life; but I had

only to get out of my own particular groove, and look around me, to observe the simple life of the real working-class, to understand that such a life was the only real one. I understood that, if I wished to understand life and its meaning, I must live, not the life of a parasite, but a real life ; and, accepting the meaning given to it by the combined lives of those that really form the great human whole, submit it to a close examination.

At the time I am speaking of, the following was my position :

During the whole of that year, when I was asking myself almost every minute whether I should or should not put an end to it all with a cord or a pistol, during the time my mind was occupied with the thoughts which I have described, my heart was oppressed by a tormenting feeling. This feeling I cannot describe otherwise than as a searching after God.

This search after a God was not an act of my reason, but a feeling, and I say this advisedly, because it was opposed to my way of thinking ; it came from the heart. It was a feeling of dread, or orphanhood, of isolation amid things all apart from me, and of hope in a help I knew not from whom.

I remember one day in the early spring-time I was alone in the forest listening to the woodland sounds, and thinking only of one thing, the same of which I had constantly thought for two years—I was again seeking for a God.

I said to myself :

“Very good, there is no God, there is none with a reality apart from my own imaginings, none as real as my own life—there is none such. Nothing, no miracles can prove there is, for miracles only exist in my own unreasonable imagination.”

And then I asked myself :

"But my idea of the God whom I seek, whence comes it?"

And again, at this thought arose the joyous billows of life. All around me seemed to revive; to have a new meaning. My joy, though, did not last long. Reason continued its work:

"The idea of a God is not God. The idea is what goes on within myself; the idea of God is an idea which I am able to rouse in my mind or not as I choose; it is not what I seek, something without which life could not be."

Then again all seemed to die around and within me, and again I wished to kill myself.

After this I began to retrace the process which had gone on within myself, the hundred times repeated discouragement and revival. I remembered that I had lived only when I believed in a God. As it was before, so it was now; I had only to know God, and I lived; I had only to forget Him, not to believe in Him, and I died.

What was this discouragement and revival? I do not live when I lose faith in the existence of a God; I should long ago have killed myself, if I had not had a dim hope of finding Him. I really live only when I am conscious of Him and seek Him. "What more then, do I seek?" A voice seemed to cry within me, "This is He, He without whom there is no life. To know God and to live are one. God is life."

Live to seek God, and life will not be without God. And stronger than ever rose up life within and around me, and the light that then shone never left me again.

TOLSTOI'S CRITICISM OF HIS AGE ¹

MAN'S WHOLE LIFE IS A CONTINUAL CONTRADICTION OF what he knows to be his duty. This contradiction prevails in every department of life, in the economical, the political and the international. As though his intelligence were forgotten and his faith temporarily eclipsed—for he must have faith, else would his life have no permanence—he acts in direct opposition to the dictates of his conscience and his common sense.

In our economical and international relations we are guided by the fundamental principles of bygone ages—principles quite contradictory to our mental attitude and the conditions of our present life.

It was right for a man who believed in the divine origin of slavery, and in its necessity, to live in the relation of a master to his slaves. But is such a life possible in these days? A man of antiquity might believe himself justified in taking advantage of his fellow-man, oppressing him for generations, merely because he believed in diversity of origin, noble or base, descent from Ham or Japheth. Not only have the greatest philosophers of ancient times, the teachers of mankind, Plato and Aristotle, justified the existence of slavery and adduced proofs of its legality, but no longer than three centuries ago those who described an ideal state of society could not picture it without slaves.

In ancient times, and even in the Middle Ages, it was honestly thought that men were not born equal, that the men worthy of respect were only Persians, only Greeks, only Romans, or only Frenchmen; but no one believes it now. And the enthusiastic advocates of the principles of

¹ From *The Kingdom of God*.

aristocracy and patriotism at this present day cannot believe in their own statements.

We all know, and cannot help knowing, even if we had never heard it defined and never attempted to define it ourselves, that we all possess an inherent conviction deep in our hearts of the truth of that fundamental doctrine of Christianity, that we are all children of one Father, yea, every one of us, wheresoever we may live, whatsoever language we may speak ; that we are all brothers, subject only to the law of love implanted in our hearts by our common Father.

Whatever may be the habits of thought or the degree of education of a man of our time, whether he be an educated liberal, whatsoever his shade of opinion, a philosopher, whatsoever may be his system, a scientist, an economist of any of the various schools, an uneducated adherent of any religious faith—every man in these days knows that in the matter of life and worldly goods all men have equal rights ; that no man is either better or worse than his fellow-men, but that all men are born free and equal. Every man has an instinctive assurance of this fact, and yet he sees his fellow-beings divided into two classes, the one in poverty and distress, which labours and is oppressed, the other idle, tyrannical, luxurious ; and not only does he see all this, but, whether voluntarily or otherwise, he falls in line with one or the other of these divisions—a course repugnant to his reason. Hence he must suffer both from his sense of the incongruity and his own share in it.

Whether he be master or slave, a man in these days is forever haunted by this distressing inconsistency between his ideal and the actual fact, nor can he fail to perceive the suffering that springs therefrom.

The masses—that is to say, the majority of mankind, who suffer and toil, their lives dull and uninteresting, never enlivened by a ray of brightness, enduring numberless

privations—are those who recognize most clearly the sharp contrasts between what is and what ought to be, between the professions of mankind and their actions.

They know that they work like slaves, that they are perishing in want and in darkness, that they may minister to the pleasures of the minority. And it is this very consciousness that enhances its bitterness; indeed, it constitutes the essence of their suffering.

A slave in old times knew that he was a slave by birth, whereas the working-man of our day, while he feels himself to be a slave, knows that he ought not to be one, and suffers the tortures of Tantalus from his unsatisfied yearning for that which not only could be granted him, but which is really his due. The sufferings of the working-classes that spring from the contradictions of their fate are magnified tenfold by the envy and hatred which are the natural fruits of the sense of these contradictions.

A working-man in our period, even though his work may be less fatiguing than the labour of the ancient slave, and even were he to succeed in obtaining the eight-hour system and twelve-and-sixpence a day, still has the worst of it, because he manufactures objects which he will never use or enjoy—he is not working for himself; he works in order to gratify the luxurious and idle, to increase the wealth of the capitalist, the mill-owner, or manufacturer. He knows that all this goes on in a world where men acknowledge certain propositions such as the economic principle that labour is wealth, that it is an act of injustice to employ another man's labour for one's own benefit, that an illegal act is punishable by law, in a world, moreover, where the doctrine of Christ is professed—that doctrine which teaches us that all men are brothers, and that it is the duty of a man to serve his neighbour and to take no unfair advantage of him.

He realizes all this, and must suffer keenly from the

shocking contradiction between the world as it should be and the world as it is. "According to what I am told and what I hear men profess," says a working-man to himself, "I ought to be a free man equal to any other man, and loved; I am a slave, hated and despised." Then he in his turn is filled with hatred, and seeks to escape from his position, to overthrow the enemy that oppresses him, and to get the upper hand himself.

They say: "It is wrong for a workman to wish himself in the place of a capitalist, or for a poor man to envy the rich." But this is false. If this were a world where God had ordained masters and slaves, rich and poor, it would be wrong for the working-man or the poor man to wish himself in the place of the rich: but this is not so; he wishes it in a world which professes the doctrine of the Gospel, whose first principle is embodied in the relation of the son to the Father, and consequently of fraternity and equality. And however reluctant men may be to acknowledge it, they cannot deny that one of the first conditions of Christian life is love, expressed, not in words, but in deeds.

The man of education suffers even more from these inconsistencies. If he has any faith whatever he believes, perhaps, in fraternity—at least in the sentiment humanity; and if not in the sentiment humanity, then in justice; and if not in justice, then surely in science; and he cannot help knowing all the while that the conditions of his life are opposed to every principle of Christianity, humanity, justice and science.

He knows that the habits of life in which he has been bred, and whose abandonment would cause him much discomfort, can only be supported by the weary and often suicidal labour of the down-trodden working-class—that is, by the open infraction of those principles of Christianity, humanity, justice and even of science (political science),

in which he professes to believe. He affirms his faith in the principles of fraternity, humanity, justice and political science, and yet the oppression of the working-class is an indispensable factor in his daily life, and he constantly employs it to attain his own ends in spite of his principles ; and he not only lives in this manner, but he devotes all his energies to maintain a system which is directly opposed to all his beliefs.

We are brothers : but every morning my brother or my sister performs for me the most menial offices. We are brothers : but I must have my morning cigar, my sugar, my mirror, or what not—objects whose manufacture has often cost my brothers and sisters their health, yet I do not for that reason forbear to use these things ; on the contrary, I even demand them. We are brothers : and yet I support myself by working in some bank, commercial house, or shop, and am always trying to raise the price of the necessities of life for my brothers and sisters. We are brothers : I receive a salary for judging, convicting, and punishing the thief or the prostitute, whose existence is the natural outcome of my own system of life, and I fully realize that I should neither condemn nor punish. We are all brothers : yet I make my living by collecting taxes from the poor, that the rich may live in luxury and idleness. We are brothers : and yet I receive a salary for preaching a pseudo-Christian doctrine, in which I do not myself believe, thus hindering men from discovering the true one ; I receive a salary as priest or bishop for deceiving people in a matter which is of vital importance to them. We are brothers : but I make my brother pay for all my services, whether I write books for him, educate him, or prescribe for him as a physician. We are all brothers : but I receive a salary for fitting myself to be a murderer, for learning the art of war, or for manufacturing arms and ammunition and building fortresses.

The whole existence of our upper classes is utterly contradictory, and the more sensitive a man's nature the more painful is the incongruity.

A man with a sensitive conscience can enjoy no peace of mind in such a life. Even supposing that he succeeds in stifling the reproaches of his conscience, he is still unable to conquer his fears.

Those men and women of the dominant classes who have hardened themselves, and have succeeded in stifling their consciences, must still suffer through their fear of the hatred they inspire. They are quite well aware of its existence among the labouring classes; they know that it can never die; they know, too, that the working-men realize the deceptions practised upon them, and the abuses that they endure; that they have started organizations to throw off the yoke, and to take vengeance on their oppressors. The happiness of the upper classes is poisoned by fear of the impending calamity, foreshadowed by the unions, the strikes, and First of May demonstrations. Recognizing the calamity that threatens them, their fear turns to defiance and hatred. They know that if they relax for one moment in this conflict with the oppressed, they are lost, because their slaves, already embittered, grow more and more so with every day's oppression. The oppressors, though they may see it, cannot cease to oppress. They realize that they themselves are doomed from the moment they abate one jot of their severity. So they go on in their career of oppression, notwithstanding their affectation of interest in the welfare of the working-men, the eight-hour system, the laws restricting the labour of women and children, the pensions and the rewards. All this is mere pretence, or at best the natural anxiety of the master to keep his slave in good condition; but the slave remains a slave all the while, and the master, who cannot live without the slave, is less willing than ever to set him

free. The governing classes find themselves in regard to the working-men very much in the position of one who has overthrown his opponent, and who holds him down, not so much because he does not choose to let him escape, but because he knows that should he for one moment lose his hold on him, he would lose his own life, for the vanquished man is infuriated, and holds a knife in his hand.

Hence our wealthy classes, whether their consciences be tender or hardened, cannot enjoy the advantages they have wrung from the poor, as did the ancients, who were convinced of the justice of their position. All the pleasures of life are poisoned either by remorse or fear.

Such is the economic inconsistency. Still more striking is that of the civil power.

A man is trained first of all in habits of obedience to State laws. At the present time every act of our lives is under the supervision of the State, and in accordance with its dictates a man marries and is divorced, rears his children, and in some countries accepts the religion it prescribes. What is this law, then, that determines the life of mankind? Do men believe in it? Do they consider it true? Not at all. In most cases they recognize its injustice, they despise it, and yet they obey it. It was fit that the ancients should obey their law. It was chiefly religious, and they sincerely believed it to be the only true law, to which all men owed obedience. Is that the case with us? We cannot refuse to acknowledge that the law of our State is not the eternal law, but only one of the many laws of many States, all equally imperfect, and frequently wholly false and unjust—a law that has been openly discussed in all its aspects by the public press. It was fit that the Hebrew should obey his laws, since he never doubted that the finger of God Himself had traced them; or for the Roman, who believed that he received them from the nymph Egeria; or even for those peoples who

the same, who welcome the birth of every wholesome and profitable thought with joy and pride, from whatsoever quarter of the globe it may spring, regardless of race or creed; we, who love not only the philanthropists, the poets, the philosophers and the scientists of other lands; we, who take as much pride in the heroism of a Father Damien as if it was our own; we, who love the French, the Germans, the Americans and the English, not only esteeming their qualities, but ready to meet them with cordial friendship; we, who not only would be shocked to consider war with them in the light of an exploit—when we picture to ourselves the possibility that at some future day a difference may arise between us that can only be reconciled by murder, and that any one of us may be called upon to play his part in an inevitable tragedy—we shudder at the thought.

Europe maintains under arms at the present time more soldiers than were in the field during the great wars of Napoleon. Every citizen on our continent, with a few exceptions, is forced to spend several years in the barracks. Fortresses, arsenals, men-of-war are built, new firearms are invented, which in a short time are replaced by others, because science, which should always be devoted to the promotion of human welfare, contributes, it must be regretfully acknowledged, to human destruction, inventing ever new means of killing greater numbers of men in the shortest possible time.

“In these stupendous preparations for slaughter, and in the maintenance of these vast numbers of troops, hundreds of millions are yearly expended—sums that would suffice to educate the masses, and to carry on the most important works of public improvement, thereby contributing toward a perfect solution of the social problem.

“Therefore, notwithstanding all our scientific victories, Europe finds herself in this respect not one whit better

off than she was in the most barbarous times of the Middle Ages. Everyone laments a state of things which is neither war nor peace, and longs to be delivered from it. The heads of governments emphatically affirm that they desire peace, and eagerly emulate each other in their pacific utterances, but almost immediately thereafter they propose to the legislative assemblies measures for increasing the armament, asserting that they take these precautions for the preservation of peace.

"But this is not the sort of peace we care for, and the nations are not deceived by it. True peace has for its foundation mutual confidence, whereas these appalling armaments show, if not a declared hostility, at least a secret distrust among the different nations. What should we say of a man who, wishing to show his friendly feelings to his neighbour, should invite him to consider a certain scheme, holding a loaded pistol while he unfolds it before him ?

"It is this monstrous contradiction between the assurances of peace and the military policy of the governments, that good citizens wish to put an end to, at any cost."

One is amazed to learn that there are 60,000 suicides reported in Europe, not including Turkey and Russia, every year, and these are all well-substantiated cases ; but it would be far more remarkable if the number were less. Any man in these times who investigates the antagonism between his convictions and his actions, finds himself in a desperate plight. Setting aside the many other contradictions between actual life and conviction which abound in the life of a man of the present day, to view the military situation in Europe in the light of its profession of Christianity is enough to make a man doubt the existence of human reason, and drive him to escape from a barbarous and insane world by putting an end to his own life.

Fully to realize this is enough to drive one to madness and to suicide, and this is but too common an occurrence, especially among soldiers.

A moment's reflection shows us why this seems an inevitable conclusion.

It explains the frightful intensity with which men plunge into all kinds of dissipation—wine, tobacco, cards, newspaper reading, travel, all manner of shows and pleasures. They pursue all these amusements in deadly earnest, as if they were serious avocations, as indeed they are. If men possessed none of these distractions, half of them would kill themselves out of hand, for to live a life that is made up of contradictions is simply unbearable, and such is the life that most of us lead at the present day. We are living in direct contradiction to our inmost convictions. This contradiction is evident both in economic and in political relations; it is manifested most unmistakably in the inconsistency of the acknowledgment of the Christian law of brotherly love and military conscription, which obliges men to hold themselves in readiness to take each other's lives—in short, every man to be at once a Christian and a gladiator. . . .

The efforts which the educated men of the upper classes are making to silence the growing consciousness that the present system of life must be changed, are constantly on the increase, while life itself, continuing to develop and to become more complex without changing its direction, as it increases the incongruities and suffering of human existence, brings men to the extreme limit of this contradiction. An example of this uttermost limit is found in the general military conscription.

It is usually supposed that this conscription, together with the increasing armaments and the consequent increase of the taxes and national debts of all countries, are the accidental results of a certain crisis in European affairs,

which might be obviated by certain political combinations, without change of the interior life.

This is utterly erroneous. The general conscription is nothing but an internal contradiction which has crept into the social life-conception, and which has only become evident because it has arrived at its utmost limits at a period when men have attained a certain degree of material development.

The social life-conception transfers the significance of life from the individual to mankind in general, through the unbroken continuity of the family, the tribe, and the State.

According to the social life-conception it is supposed that as the significance of life is comprised in the sum total of mankind, each individual will of his own accord sacrifice his interests to those of the whole. This in fact has always been the case with certain aggregates, like the family or the tribe.

But the more complex became societies, the larger they grew—conquest especially contributing to unite men in social organizations—the more individuals would be found striving to attain their ends at the expense of their fellow-men ; and thus the necessity for subjugation by power, or, in other words, by violence, became more and more frequent.

The advocates of the social life-conception usually attempt to combine the idea of authority, otherwise violence, with that of moral influence ; but such a union is utterly impossible.

The result of moral influence upon man is to change his desires, so that he willingly complies with what is required of him. A man who yields to moral influence takes pleasure in conforming his actions to its laws ; whereas authority, as the word is commonly understood, is a means of coercion, by which a man is forced to act in opposition

to his wishes. A man who submits to authority does not do as he pleases, he yields to compulsion, and in order to force a man to do something for which he has an aversion, the threat of physical violence, or violence itself, must be employed : he may be deprived of his liberty, flogged, mutilated, or he may be threatened with these punishments. And this is what constitutes power both in the past and in the present.

Despite the unremitting efforts of rulers to conceal these facts, and to attribute a different significance to authority, it simply means the rope and chain wherewith a man is bound and dragged, the lash wherewith he is flogged, the knife or axe wherewith his limbs, nose, ears, and head are hewed off. Authority is either the menace or the perpetration of these acts. This was the practice in the times of Nero and Genghis Khan, and is still in force even in the most liberal governments, like the republics of France and America. If men submit to authority, it is only because they fear that if they were to resist, they would be subjected to violence. All the requisitions of the State, such as the payment of taxes and the fulfilment of public duties, the submission to penalties in the form of exile, fines, etc., to which men seem to yield voluntarily, are always enforced by the physical threat or the reality of physical punishment.

Physical violence is the basis of authority.

It is the military organization that makes it possible to inflict physical violence, that organization wherein the entire armed force acts as one man, obeying a single will. This assemblage of armed men, submitting to one will, forms what is called an army. The army has ever been and still is the basis of an authority, vested in the commanding generals ; and the most engrossing interest of every sovereign, from the Roman Cæsars, to the Russian and German emperors, has always been to protect and

flatter the army, for they realize that when the army is on their side, power is also in their hands.

It is the drilling and the increase of the troops required for the maintenance of authority which has brought into the social life-conception an element of dissolution.

As its power increases in measure of its duration, State authority, though it may eradicate internal violence, introduces into life other and new forms of violence, always increasing in intensity. And though the violence of authority in the State is less striking than that of individual members of society toward each other, its principal manifestation being not that of strife, but of oppression, it exists none the less, and in the highest degree.

It cannot be otherwise ; for not only does the possession of authority corrupt men, but, either from design or unconsciously, rulers are always striving to reduce their subjects to the lowest degree of weakness—for the more feeble the subject, the less the effort required to subdue him.

Therefore violence employed against the oppressed is pushed to its utmost limit, just stopping short of killing the hen that lays the golden egg. But if the hen has ceased to lay, like the American Indians, the Fiji Islanders, or the Negroes, then it is killed, despite the sincere protests of the philanthropists against that mode of procedure.

The most conclusive proof of this assertion, at the present time, is the position of the working-men, who are in truth simply vanquished men.

Despite all the pretended efforts of the upper classes to lighten their position, all the working-men of the world are subjected to an immutable iron rule, which prescribes that they shall have scarcely enough to live upon, in order that their necessities may urge them to unremitting toil, the fruits of which are to be enjoyed by their masters, in other words, their conquerors.

It has always been the case that, after the long continuance and growth of power, the advantages accruing to those who have submitted to it have failed, while the disadvantages have multiplied.

But until lately they have been unaware of the fact, and for the most part have innocently believed that governments were instituted for their benefit, to preserve them from destruction, and that to permit the idea that men might live without governments would be a thought sacrilegious beyond expression ; it would be the doctrine of anarchy, with all its attendant horrors.

Men believed, as in something so thoroughly proved that it needed no further testimony, that as all nations had hitherto developed into the State form, this was to remain the indispensable condition for the development of mankind forever.

And so it has gone on for hundreds, nay, thousands of years, and the governments, that is to say, their representatives, have endeavoured, and still go on endeavouring, to preserve this delusion among the people.

As it was during the time of the Roman emperors, so it is now. Although the idea of the uselessness, and even of the detriment, of power enters more and more into the consciousness of men, it might endure forever, if governments did not think it necessary to increase the armies in order to support their authority.

It is the popular belief that governments increase armies as a means of defence against other nations, forgetting that troops are principally needed by governments to protect them against their own enslaved subjects.

This has always been necessary, and has grown more so with the spread of education, the increase of intercourse among different nationalities ; and at the present time, in view of the communist, socialist, anarchist and labour movements, it is a more urgent necessity than ever. Govern-

ments realize this fact, and increase their principal means of defence—the disciplined army.

If a working-man has no land, if he is not allowed to enjoy the natural right possessed by every man, to draw from the soil the means of subsistence for himself and his family, it is not so because the people oppose it, but because the right to grant or to withhold this privilege from working-men is given to certain individuals—namely, to the landed proprietors. And this unnatural order of things is maintained by the troops. If the enormous wealth earned and saved by working-men is not regarded as common property, but as something to be enjoyed by the chosen few; if certain men are invested with the power of levying taxes on labour, and with the right of using that money for whatsoever purposes they deem necessary; if the strikes of the working-men are suppressed, and the trusts of the capitalists are encouraged; if certain men are allowed to choose in the matter of religious and civil education and the instruction of children; if to certain others the right is given to frame laws which all men must obey, and if they are to enjoy the control of human life and property—all this is not because the people wish it, or because it has come about in the course of nature, but because the governments will have it so for their own advantage and that of the ruling classes; and all this is accomplished by means of physical violence.

If every man is not yet aware of this, he will find it out whenever attempts are made to change the present order of things.

And therefore all the governments and the ruling classes stand in need of troops above all things, in order to maintain a system of life which, far from having developed from the needs of the people, is often detrimental to them, and is only advantageous for the government and the ruling classes.

Every government requires troops to enforce obedience, that it may profit by the labour of its subjects. But no government exists alone : side by side with it stands the government of the adjacent country, which is also profiting by the enforced labour of its subjects, and ever ready to pounce upon its neighbour and take possession of the goods which it has won from the labour of its own subjects. Hence it is that every government needs an army, not only for home use, but to guard its plunder from foreign depredations. Thus each government finds itself obliged to outdo its neighbour in the increase of its army, and, as Montesquieu said one hundred and fifty years ago, the expansion of armies is a veritable contagion.

One State makes additions to its army in order to overawe its own subjects ; its neighbour takes alarm, and straightway follows the example.

Armies have reached the millions which they now number not only from the fear of foreign invasion ; the increase was first caused by the necessity for putting down all attempts at rebellion on the part of the subjects of the State. The causes for the expansion of armies are contemporary, the one depending on the other ; armies are needed against internal attempts at revolt, as well as for external defence. The one depends upon the other. The despotism of governments increases exactly in proportion to the increase of their strength and their internal successes, and their foreign aggression with the increase of internal despotism.

General military conscription is the last step in the process of coercion required by governments for the support of the whole structure ; for subjects it is the extreme limit of obedience. It is the keystone of the arch that supports the walls, the abstraction of which would destroy the whole fabric. The time has come when the ever-growing abuses of governments, and their mutual

contests, have required from all their subjects not only material but moral sacrifices, till each man pauses and asks himself, Can I make these sacrifices? And for whose sake am I to make them? These sacrifices are demanded in the name of the State. In the name of the State I am asked to give up all that makes life dear to a man—peace, family, safety and personal dignity. What, then, is this State in whose name such appalling sacrifices are demanded? And of what use is it?

We are told that the State is necessary, in the first place, because were it not for that no man would be safe from violence and the attacks of wicked men; in the second place, without the State we should be like savages, possessing neither religion, morals, education, instruction, commerce, means of communication, nor any other social institutions; and, in the third place, because without the State we should be subject to the invasion of the neighbouring nations.

“Were it not for the State,” we are told, “we should be subjected to violence and to the attacks of evil men in our own land.”

But who are these evil men from whose violence and attacks the government and the army saves us? If such men existed three or four centuries ago, when men prided themselves on their military skill and strength of arm, when a man proved his valour by killing his fellow-men, we find none such at the present time: men of our time neither use nor carry weapons, and, believing in the precepts of humanity and pity for their neighbours, they are as desirous for peace and a quiet life as we are ourselves. Hence this extraordinary class of marauders, against whom the State might defend us, no longer exists.

One might say quite the reverse nowadays, for the activity of governments, with their antiquated and merciless methods of punishment, their galleys, prisons, gallows and guillotines, so far below the general plane of morality,

tends rather to lower the standard of morals than to elevate it, and therefore rather to increase than to lessen the number of criminals.

It is said that "without the State there would be no institutions, educational, moral, religious, or international; there would be no means of communication. Were it not for the State, we should be without organizations necessary to all of us."

An argument like this could only have had a basis several centuries ago. If there ever was a time when men had so little international communication, and were so unused to intercourse or interchange of thought that they could not come to an agreement on matters of general interest—commercial, industrial or economical—without the assistance of the State, such is not the case at present. The widely diffused means of communication and transmission of thought have achieved this result—that when the modern man desires to found societies, assemblies, corporations, congresses, scientific, economical or political institutions, not only can he easily dispense with the assistance of governments, but in the majority of cases governments are more of a hindrance than a help in the pursuit of such objects.

Since the end of the last century almost every progressive movement on the part of mankind has been not only discouraged, but invariably hampered, by governments. Such was the case with the abolition of corporal punishment, torture and slavery; with the establishment of freedom of the press and liberty of meeting. Furthermore, State authorities and governments nowadays not only do not co-operate, but they directly hinder the activity by means of which men work out new forms of life. The solution of labour and land questions, of political and religious problems, is not only unencouraged, but distinctly opposed, by the government authority.

"If there were no State and government authority, nations would be subjugated by their neighbours."

It is not worth while to answer this last argument. It refutes itself.

We are told that the government and its armies are necessary for our defence against the neighbouring States which might subject us. But all the governments say this of one another; and yet we know that every European nation professes the same principles of liberty and fraternity, and therefore needs no defence against its neighbour. But if one speaks of defence against barbarians, then one per cent. of the troops under arms at the present time would suffice. It is not only that the increase of armed force fails to protect us from danger of attack from our neighbours, it actually provokes the very attack which it deprecates.

Hence no man who reflects on the significance of the State, in whose name he is required to sacrifice his peace, his safety, and his life, can escape the conviction that there is no longer any reasonable ground for such sacrifices. . . .

The Christian nations of the present day are in a position no less cruel than that of pagan times. In many respects, especially in the matter of oppression, their position has grown worse. In the former the external aspect of cruelty and slavery corresponded with the inner consciousness of men, a conformity which only increased as time went on; in the latter the external condition of cruelty and slavery is in utter contradiction to the Christian consciousness of men, a contradiction which grows more and more striking every year.

The misery and suffering resulting therefrom seem so useless. It is like prolonged suffering in child-labour. Everything is ready for the coming life, and yet no life appears.

Apparently the situation is without deliverance. It would indeed be so were it not that to men, and therefore

to the world, there has been vouchsafed the capacity for a loftier conception of life, which has the power to set free, and at once, from all fetters, however firmly riveted.

And this is the Christian life-conception presented to men eighteen hundred years ago.

A man has but to understand his life as Christianity teaches him to understand it ; that is, he must realize that it does not belong to himself, nor to his family, nor to the State, but to Him who sent him into the world ; he must therefore know that it is his duty to live, not in accordance with the law of his own personality, nor of that of his family or State, but to fulfil the infinite law of Him who gave him life, in order to feel himself so entirely free from all human authority that he will cease to regard it as a possible obstacle.

A man needs but to realize that the object of his life is the fulfilment of God's law ; then the pre-eminence of that law, claiming as it does his entire allegiance, will of necessity invalidate the authority and restrictions of all human laws.

The Christian who contemplates that law of love implanted in every human soul, and quickened by Christ, the only guide for all mankind, is set free from human authority.

A Christian may suffer from external violence, may be deprived of his personal freedom, may be a slave to his passions—the man who commits sin is the slave of the sin—but he cannot be controlled or coerced by threats into committing an act contrary to his consciousness. He cannot be forced to this, because the privations and sufferings that are so powerful an influence over men who hold the social life-conception have no influence whatever over him. The privations and sufferings that destroy the material welfare which is the object of the social life-conception produce no effect upon the welfare of the Christian's life,

which rests on the consciousness that he is doing God's will—nay, they may even serve to promote that welfare when they are visited upon him for fulfilling that will.

A Christian, therefore, who submits to the inner, the divine law, is not only unable to execute the biddings of the outward law when they are at variance with his consciousness of God's law of love, as in the case of the demands made upon him by the government; but he cannot acknowledge the obligation of obeying any individual whomsoever, cannot acknowledge himself to be what is called a subject. For a Christian to promise to subject himself to any government whatsoever—a subjection which may be considered the foundation of State life—is a direct negation of Christianity; since an individual who promises beforehand to obey implicitly every law that men may enact, by that promise utters an emphatic denial of Christianity, whose very essence is obedience in all contingencies to the law which he feels to be within him—the law of love. . . .

The position of the Christian world, with its fortresses, cannon, dynamite, guns, torpedoes, prisons, gallows, churches, factories, custom-houses, and palaces, is monstrous. But neither fortresses nor cannon nor guns by themselves can make war, nor can the prisons lock their gates, nor the gallows hang, nor the churches themselves lead men astray, nor the custom-houses claim their dues, nor palaces and factories build and support themselves; all these operations are performed by men. And when men understand that they need not make them, then these things will cease to be.

And already men are beginning to understand this. If not yet understood by all, it is already understood by those whom the rest of the world eventually follows. And it is impossible to cease to understand what once has been understood, and the masses not only can, but

inevitably must, follow where those who have understood have already led the way.

Hence the prophecy : that a time will come when all men will hearken unto the word of God, will forget the arts of war, will melt their swords into ploughshares and their lances into reaping-hooks—which, being translated, means when all the prisons, the fortresses, the barracks, the palaces, and the churches will remain empty, the gallows and the cannon will be useless. This is no longer a mere Utopia, but a new and definite system of life, toward which mankind is progressing with ever-increasing rapidity.

But when will it come ?

Eighteen hundred years ago Christ, in answer to this question, replied that the end of the present world—that is, of the pagan system—would come when the miseries of man had increased to their utmost limit ; and when, at the same time, the good news of the Kingdom of Heaven—that is, of the possibility of a new system, one not founded upon violence—should be proclaimed throughout the earth.

“ But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only,” said Christ. “ Watch therefore : for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”

When will the hour arrive ? Christ said that we cannot know. And for that very reason we should hold ourselves in readiness to meet it.

There can be no other answer. The day and the hour of the advent of the Kingdom of God men cannot know, since the coming of that hour depends only on men themselves.

The reply is like that of the wise man who, when the traveller asked him how far he was from the city, answered, “ Go on ! ”

How can we know if it is still far to the goal toward

which humanity is aiming, when we do not know how it will move toward it; that it depends on humanity whether it moves steadily onward or pauses, whether it accelerates or retards its pace.

All that we can know is what we who form humanity should or should not do in order to bring about this Kingdom of God. And that we all know; for each one has but to begin to do his duty, each one has but to live according to the light that is within him, to bring about the immediate advent of the promised Kingdom of God, for which the heart of every man yearns. . . .

TOLSTOI'S PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY¹

TOWARDS THE END OF THE YEAR 1811 BEGAN A MOBILIZATION and concentration of forces in Western Europe; and in 1812, these forces—millions of men, counting those who were concerned in the transport and victualling of the armies—were moved from West to East toward the borders of Russia, where the Russian forces were drawn up just as they had been the year before.

On the 24th of June, the forces of Western Europe crossed the Russian frontier, and war began: in other words, an event took place opposed to human reason and human nature.

Millions of men committed against one another a countless number of crimes, deceptions, treacheries, robberies, forgeries, issues of false assignats, depredations, incendiary fires, murders, such as the annals of all the courts in all the world could not equal in the aggregate of centuries; and yet which, at that period, the perpetrators did not even regard as crimes.

What brought about this extraordinary event?

What were its causes?

The historians, with naïve credulity, say that the causes of this event are to be found in the affront offered to the Duke of Oldenburg, in the disregard of the "Continental System," in Napoleon's ambition, Alexander's firmness, the mistakes of diplomatists, and what not.

Of course, in that case, to put a stop to the war, it would have merely required Metternich, Rumyantsov or Talleyrand, between a levee and a rout, to have made a little effort and skilfully composed a state paper; or Napoleon to

¹ From *War and Peace*.

have written to Alexander : *Monsieur, mon Frère, je consens à rendre le duché au Duc d'Oldenbourg.*¹

It is easily understood that the matter presented itself in that light to the men of that day. It is easily understood that Napoleon attributed the cause of the war to England's intrigues (indeed he said so on the island of St. Helena) ; it is easily understood that the members of the British Parliament attributed the cause of the war to Napoleon's ambition ; that Prince Oldenburg considered the war to have been caused by the insult which he had received ; that the merchants regarded the "Continental System," which was ruining European trade, as responsible for it ; that old veterans and generals saw the chief cause for it in the necessity to find them something to do ; the legitimist of that day, in the necessity of upholding sound principles ; and the diplomatists in the fact that the Russian alliance with Austria, in 1809, had not been cleverly enough kept from Napoleon's knowledge and that memorandum No. 178 was awkwardly expressed.

It is easily understood that these, and an endless number of other reasons—the diversity of which is simply proportioned to the infinite diversity of standpoints—satisfied the men who were living at that time ; but for us, Posterity, who are far enough removed to contemplate the magnitude of the event from a wider perspective, and who seek to fathom its simple and terrible meaning, such reasons appear insufficient. To us it is incomprehensible that millions of Christian men killed and tortured each other because Napoleon was ambitious, Alexander firm, English policy astute and Duke Oldenburg affronted. It is impossible to comprehend what connection these circumstances have with the fact itself of murder and violence : why, in consequence of the affront put on the duke, thousands of men

¹ Sir, and Imperial Brother, I agree to restore the duchy to the Duke of Oldenburg.

from the other end of Europe should have killed and plundered the people of the governments of Smolensk and Moscow, and have been killed by them.

For us, Posterity, who are not historians, and not carried away by any far-fetched processes of reasoning, and who can, therefore, contemplate the phenomena with unclouded and healthy vision, the causes thereof arise before us in all their innumerable quantity. The deeper we delve into the investigation of causes, the more numerous do they open up before us ; and every separately considered cause, or whole series of causes, appears equally efficient in its own nature, and equally fallacious by reason of its utter insignificance in comparison with the prodigiousness of the events ; and equally fallacious also by reason of its inability, without the co-operation of all the other causes combined, to produce the events in question.

Such a cause as the refusal of Napoleon to draw his army back within the Vistula, and to restore the duchy of Oldenburg, has as much weight in this consideration as the willingness or unwillingness of a single French corporal to take part in the second campaign ; because, if he had refused, and a second, and a third, and a thousand corporals and soldiers had likewise refused, Napoleon's army would have been so greatly reduced that the war could not have occurred.

If Napoleon had not been offended by the demand to retire his troops beyond the Vistula, and had not issued orders for them to give battle, there would have been no war ; but if all the sergeants had refused to go into action, there also would have been no war. And there would also have been no war if there had been no English intrigues, and no Prince Oldenburg ; and if Alexander had not felt himself aggrieved ; and if there had been no autocratic power in Russia ; and if there had been no French Revolution, and no Dictatorship and Empire

following it ; and nothing of all that led up to the Revolution, and so on. Had any one of these causes been missing, war could not have taken place. Consequently, all of them—milliards of causes—must have co-operated to bring about what resulted.

And, as a corollary, there could have been no exclusive final cause for these events ; and the great event was accomplished simply because it had to be accomplished. Millions of men, renouncing all their human feelings, and their reason, had to march from West to East, and kill their fellows ; exactly the same as, several centuries before, swarms of men had swept from East to West, likewise killing their fellows.

The deeds of Napoleon and Alexander, on whose fiat apparently depended this or that occurrence, were just as far from being spontaneous and free as the actions of any soldier taking part in the expedition, either as a conscript or as a recruit. This was inevitably the case, because, in order that Napoleon's or Alexander's will should be executed—they being apparently the men on whom the event depended—the co-operation of countless factors was requisite, one of which failing, the event could not have occurred. It was indispensable that millions of men, in whose hands was really all the power, soldiers who fought, and men who transported munitions of war and cannon, should consent to carry out the will of these two feeble human units ; and they were brought to this by an endless number of complicated and varied causes.

Fatalism in history is unavoidable, if we would explain its preposterous phenomena (that is to say, those events the reason for which is beyond our comprehension). The more we strive by our reason to explain these phenomena in history, the more illogical and incomprehensible to us they become.

Every man lives for himself, and enjoys sufficient freedom

for the attainment of his own personal ends, and is conscious in his whole being that he can instantly perform or refuse to perform any action ; but as soon as he has done it, this action, accomplished in a definite period of time, becomes irrevocable and forms an element in history, in which it takes its place with a fully preordained and no longer capricious significance.

Every man has a twofold life : on one side is his personal life, which is free in proportion as its interests are abstract ; the other is life as an element, as one bee in the swarm ; and here a man has no chance of disregarding the laws imposed on him.

Man consciously lives for himself ; but, at the same time, he serves as an unconscious instrument for the accomplishment of historical and social ends. An action once accomplished is fixed ; and when a man's activity coincides with others ; with the millions of actions of other men, it acquires historical significance. The higher a man stands on the social ladder, the more men he is connected with, the greater the influence he exerts over others—the more evident is the predestined and unavoidable necessity of his every action.

“ The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord.”

The King is the slave of history.

History, that is to say, the unconscious, universal life of humanity, in the aggregate, every moment profits by the life of kings for itself, as an instrument for the accomplishment of its own ends.

Napoleon, notwithstanding the fact that never before had it seemed so evident to him as now in this year 1812, that it depended on him whether he should shed or not shed the blood of his people—*verser le sang de ses peuples*, as Alexander expressed it in his last letter to him—was in reality never so subordinated to the inevitable laws that compelled him—even while, as it seemed to him, working

in accordance with his own free will—to accomplish for the world in general, for history, what was destined to be accomplished.

The men of the West moved towards the East so as to kill one another. And, by the law of coincidences, thousands of trifling causes made themselves into the guise of final causes, and coinciding with this event, apparently explained this movement and this war: the dissatisfaction at the non-observance of the "Continental System"; and the Duke of Oldenburg; and the invasion of Prussia, undertaken (as it seemed to Napoleon) simply for the purpose of bringing about an armed peace; and the French emperor's love and habit of war coinciding with the disposition of his people; the attraction of grander preparations, and the outlays for such preparations, and the necessity for indemnities for meeting these outlays; and the intoxicating honours paid at Dresden; and the diplomatic negotiations which, in the opinion of contemporaries, were conducted with a sincere desire to preserve peace, but which merely offended the pride of either side; and millions of millions of other causes, serving as specious reasons for this event which has to take place, and coinciding with it.

When an apple is ripe and falls, what makes it fall? Is it the attraction of gravitation? or is it because its stem withers? or because the sun dries it up? or because it is heavy? or because the wind shakes it? or because the small boy standing underneath is hungry for it?

There is no such proximate cause. The whole thing is the result of all those conditions, in accordance with which every vital, organic, complex event occurs. And the botanist who argues that the apple fell from the effect of decomposing vegetable tissue, or the like, is just as much in the right as the boy who, standing below, declares that the apple fell because he wanted to eat it, and prayed for it.

Equally right and equally wrong would be the one who should say that Napoleon went to Moscow because he wanted to go, and was ruined because Alexander wished him to be ruined ; equally right and equally wrong would be the man who should declare that a mountain, weighing millions of tons and undermined, fell in consequence of the last blow of the mattock dealt by the last labourer. In the events of history, so-called great men are merely tags that supply a name to the event, and have quite as little connection with the event itself as the tag.

Every one of their actions, though apparently performed by their own free will, is, in its historical significance, out of the scope of volition, and is correlated with the whole trend of history ; and is, consequently, preordained from all eternity.

As the sun and every atom of ether is a sphere perfect in itself, and at the same time only an atom in the mighty All inaccessible to man, so each individual has within himself his own objects, and at the same time serves the common object inaccessible to man.

The bee, poising on a flower, stings a child. And the child is afraid of bees, and declares that the aim of the bee is to sting people.

The poet admires the bee sucking from the calyx of a flower, and declares to us that the end of the bee is to absorb into itself the aroma of the flowers.

The bee-keeper, observing that the bee gathers pollen and brings it home to the hive, declares that the end of the bees is the manufacture of honey.

Another bee-keeper, observing more closely the habits of the swarm, declares that the bee gathers pollen for the nourishment of the young bees and the exploitation of the queen, and that the object of the bees is the propagation of the species.

A botanist observes that the bee, in flying with the dust

of a dioecious flower to the pistils of another, fertilizes it ; and the botanist sees in this the object of the bee.

Another, observing the transmigration of plants, sees that the bee assists in this transmigration ; and this new observer may say that in this consists the object of the bee.

But the final object of the bee is not wholly included in the first or the second or the third of the objects which the human mind is able to discover.

The higher the human mind rises in its efforts to discover these objects, the more evident it is that the final object is inaccessible to man.

Man can only observe the correlation existing between the life of the bee and the other phenomena of life. The same is true in regard to the objects of historical personages and nations.

TOLSTOI'S ETHICAL THOUGHT IN IMAGINATIVE FORM

[SHORT STORIES]

NICHOLAS BIGSTICK

(*Nikolai Palkin*)

HE SPENT THE NIGHT AT THE HOUSE OF A NINETY-FIVE-year-old soldier. He had served under Alexander I. and Nicholas I.

"What, gaffer, you want to die?"

"Die? How I wish I might! Once I was afraid, but now I ask God for only one thing—that He allow me confession and communion. I have many sins."

"What kind of sins could they be?"

"You ask me that? Don't you know when I served? In Nicholas' time. Was the army then the way it is to-day? What was everything like then? When you think of it, it makes you shudder. I can even remember Alexander's time. The soldiers spoke well of Alexander. He was kind, people said."

I thought back to the last days of Alexander when, out of a hundred men, twenty were flogged to death. Nicholas must have been kind indeed if Alexander was called kind by comparison with him.

"And then I served in Nicholas' time," said the old man, and he grew animated, and began to talk.

"How was it in those days? In those days it was not worth while for them to take down their breeches for fifty lashes. A hundred and fifty, two hundred, three hundred—they flogged people to death!"

He said it with horror and aversion, and not without pride in the achievements of the past. "And when they used the stick—not a week went by without their beating one or two men of the regiment to death. To-day nobody really knows what a stick is. In those days the word was always and always in the men's mouths. 'The stick! The stick!'

"Our soldiers gave Nicholas the patronymic of Bigstick. Nicholas Pavlovitch—but the men always said Nicholas Bigstick. That was his second name. When you think back to those days," the old man went on, "—a man has lived out his life, and it's time to die—when you think back it makes your heart heavy to think of it.

"A man took many sins on his soul! Obedience was the thing. You get a hundred and fifty blows of the stick on account of a soldier [the man had been a subaltern and a sergeant, and was now a *Kandidat*], and you give him two hundred. It doesn't heal your wounds, but you torment him—what a sin!

"The subalterns beat the young soldiers to death. With a gunstock or with his fist he hammers the particular spot, in the chest or on the head, and the man dies. And nobody inquires. The man dies of the blows, and the superior writes, 'Died by act of God,' and an end of it. And did I understand it then? A man thinks only of himself. And now one just rolls about on top of the stove, can't sleep at night, and thinks and thinks, and sees everything clearly before him again. A man is fortunate if he has a chance to take communion according to Christ's commandment, and to be forgiven. Otherwise terror gets hold of you. When you think back to everything you have suffered, and what other people have suffered through you, you don't need any hell; it's worse than Hell and Devil."

I imagined vividly what memories the old fellow, this dying man, must have in his loneliness, and my heart

ached. I thought of the dreadful things besides the clubbings which he had had to take part in—how he had had to hound people to death by flogging through the line, by shooting, by murder and sacking of cities in war (he had been in the Polish campaign), and I asked him about all the details. I asked him about flogging through the line.

He told at length about this fearful practice. How the man, who is tied to the guns, is led through between the soldiers, who are arranged in a lane with the switches in their hands, and how they all hit out; and the officers walk behind the soldiers, yelling, "Hit harder! Hit harder!"

The old man yelled this in a tone of command, and one could tell that the memory of this tone and its reproduction gave him a certain satisfaction.

He told all the details without a trace of remorse, as if he were explaining how oxen are butchered and their meat dressed.

And when I tried to awaken a feeling of remorse in him at all these memories, he was first puzzled and then horrified.

"Not at all," he said, "how so? It was all done in proper course. Was it my fault? It was according to law."

He showed the same calm and the same lack of any regret for the horrors of war which he had taken part in, and which he had watched go on a thousand times in Turkey and Poland.

What must the old man feel if he were to understand the thing that ought to be clear to him on the threshold of death—that there was and could be no intermediary between his conscience and God at this moment, on the eve of death; and that there was and could be likewise no intermediary at the moment when he was ordered to torment and kill people! What must he feel if he were to understand that nothing can expiate the evil he did to men when it was in

his power not to do it to them ! If he were to understand that there is an eternal law which he always knew and was bound to know, the law that commands love and kindness for men ; but that what he called law was a shameless and godless cheat which he should not have submitted to ! It is awful to think of the images that pass through his mind during his sleepless nights on top of the stove, and of what despair must be his if he were to understand that when he had the power to do good or evil to men he did only evil, and that now, when he understood what good and evil consist of, he could no longer do anything but feel vain torments of regret. His tortures would be horrible.

And why should we wish to torment him ? Why plague the conscience of a dying old man ? Is it not better to soothe it ? Why stir up the people, and recall what is long since past and gone ?

Past and gone ? What is past and gone ? Can anything be gone that we never have begun to exterminate and to cure, that we even hesitate to call by its right name ?

To us the cruelty and senselessness of burning heretics and of torture as a means of judicial inquiry are perfectly plain. Every child recognizes their uselessness. But the men of those days did not see it. Intelligent, learned people maintained that torture was a necessary part of human society, a necessary evil. And it is the same with the beatings, with slavery. That time is gone, and we can scarcely imagine the state of mind of men in whom such aberrations were possible. But so it has been in all ages, and so therefore must it be in our own, and we must be equally blind to our own atrocities.

Where is our torture, our slavery, our stick ? To us it seems as if they were not present, as if they had once existed and were gone. But it only seems so, because we will not understand the past, and carefully shut our eyes so as not to see it.

But if we look back into the past with sharp eyes, our own present situation and its causes will display themselves. If only we call *auto-da-fés*, branding, torture, places of execution, conscription by their right names, we shall soon find the right terms for prisons, penitentiaries, wars with universal conscription, for public prosecutors and policemen. When we no longer say, Why remember the old days, we shall see and understand what goes on now.

When we see that it is senseless and cruel to behead people and to get the truth out of them by cracking their joints, we shall also see that it is as senseless and cruel, if not more so, to string people up or thrust them into solitary confinement as bad as death or worse, and to search for truth through paid lawyers and public prosecutors.

When we have understood that it is senseless and cruel to kill a man who has gone astray, we shall also understand that it is far more senseless still to put such a man in a penitentiary, there to destroy him entirely; when we have understood that it is senseless and cruel to herd the peasants in for military service, and burn them with a brand like cattle, we shall think it equally senseless and cruel to call in every man of twenty-one to the soldiery. When we have realized how senseless and cruel the old bodyguards were, we shall see even more plainly the whole senselessness and cruelty of guards and patrols.

When at last we have ceased to close our eyes to the past and to say, Why remember the old days? we shall see that our own time has its atrocities, only in new forms.

We say: All that is over with; there is no more torture now, no more lascivious Catherines with their all-powerful lovers, no slavery, no beatings to death. But it all merely looks so to us. There are three hundred thousand people in prisons and punitive regiments, squeezed into small, evil-smelling rooms, dying a slow physical and spiritual

death. Their wives and children are left to starve, and these men are kept in dens of iniquity, in prisons and penal colonies ; and only the guards, the all-powerful masters of these slaves, get any advantage from the cruel, senseless captivity.

Ten thousand people with " dangerous ideas " are banished, and thus take those ideas to the farthest corners of Russia ; they go crazy and hang themselves. Thousands sit in the fortresses, and are either secretly killed by the prison overseers or driven to madness by solitary confinement. Millions of men are destroyed body and soul in the slavery of the manufacturers. Hundreds of thousands of men, autumn after autumn, leave their families and their young wives, learn to kill, and are systematically corrupted.

It needs no particular acuteness to see that our day is like the past, and that our time is filled with the same atrocities, the same tortures, and that one day their cruelty and senselessness will likewise arouse the wonder of generations to come. It is the same sickness, and not the sickness of those who profit by these atrocities.

Let them profit a hundred, a thousand times over. Let them build towers, theatres, give balls, suck the people's blood ; let Bigstick flog the people to death, let Pobyedonostsev and Orzhevsky string up hundreds in secret at the fortresses ; but *let them do that only*, and let them not destroy the people morally, let them not cheat it by forcing it to take part in everything as my old soldier here had done.

The frightful sickness consists in the fraudulent pretence that there could be anything holier, any higher law for man than the holiness and the law of loving one's neighbour ; in the cheat which hides from a man that he may do many things to satisfy the demands of other men, but that as a man there is one thing he must never do at the desire

of another : act against God's will, and torment and kill his fellow-men.

Eighteen hundred years ago the question of the Pharisees, whether they must pay the taxes to Cæsar, was answered with the words : Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's ; and unto God the things that are God's.

If there was any faith in men, if they felt only the slightest duty to God, they would feel their duty above all to that which God not only taught men in words when he said : Thou shalt not kill, when he said : Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, when he said : Love thy neighbour as thyself ; but which he wrote indelibly in every man's heart : Love of one's neighbour, kindness towards him, abhorrence of murder and of tormenting one's fellow-man.

If men believed in God, they could not refuse their first duty toward Him—not to torment and not to kill. The words, Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's ; and unto God the things that are God's, would have for them a clear, definite meaning. For Cæsar or anyone, anything you please—the man of faith would say—only not what is against God's will.

If the Emperor needs my money, take it ; my house, my work, take it ; my wife, my children, my life, take it ; none of those is God's. But if the Emperor demands that I raise the rod and let it fall upon the back of my neighbour, that is God's. My act is my life, is that for which I must account to God ; and what God has forbidden me to do I cannot do even for the Emperor. I cannot bind a man, imprison him, persecute him, kill him ; all that is my life, and my life is God's, and I can give it to no one but God.

The words, Render unto God the things that are God's, mean to us that we give God candles and prayers, everything that no one needs, God least of any. And all the rest, our whole life, the shrine of our soul, which belongs to

God, we have given unto Cæsar, that is (as the Jews regarded Cæsar) to an odious man from afar.

Is this not fearful? Men, bethink yourselves!

THREE PARABLES

First Parable

THERE was a beautiful meadow; and weeds had sprung up in it. The owners of the meadow mowed it, but the weeds only increased the more. Then one day a wise and good husbandman came to the owners of the meadow, and gave them much good advice. And he also told them that weeds must not be mowed, for that would but spread them; they must be torn out by the roots.

Now whether it was because among the many instructions given by the good husbandman the owners of the meadow overlooked the instruction not to mow weeds, but to tear them out by the roots, or because on reasonings of their own they did not wish to follow it, at all events they neglected the advice not to mow the weeds, but to tear them out by the roots; they acted as if they had never heard it, and continued to mow the weeds and thus to help their growth. And although in the succeeding years people kept coming and recalling the wise and good husbandman's advice to the owners of the meadow, still they did not stop. They went on as before, so that the mowing of the weeds as they appeared became a regular custom, nay more, a sacred tradition, and the meadow was more and more choked with weeds. It came to the point where the meadow was altogether overrun. People complained, and thought out many means of correction. The only method they did not use was that advised long years before by the good husbandman. Then it happened

that at last a man who had noticed the wretched condition of the meadow, and who discovered in the forgotten instructions of the husbandman the statement that weeds must not be mowed but torn out by the roots—then it happened that this man represented to the owners of the meadow that they were acting unreasonably, and that the wise and good husbandman had long since shown them the unreasonableness of their ways.

What happened ?

Instead of testing the truth of the man's warning, and (if it was correct) ceasing in future to mow the weeds ; or (if it was incorrect) proving to him the baselessness of his warning, or recognizing the instructions of the wise and good husbandman as unfounded, or maintaining that the instructions were not binding upon them ; the owners of the meadow did none of these things. Instead they felt injured by the warnings of this man, and abused him. Some called him foolish and arrogant because he imagined that he alone of all mankind had understood the instruction of the husbandman ; others called him a malicious false prophet and slanderer ; yet others, quite forgetting that he had expressed no opinion of his own, but had only recalled the instructions of the universally revered wise husbandman, called him a dangerous character who meant to spread weeds, and deprive men of their meadow. The weeds must not be mowed, he says, and if we do not destroy them—thus people talked, purposely forgetting that the man had not said the weeds must not be destroyed, but only that they should not be mowed, and should be uprooted instead—the weeds will choke the whole meadow, and destroy it altogether. And why was the meadow given us, if we are to grow weeds on it ?

And the opinion that this man was a fool or a false prophet, or intended to harm mankind, grew so fixed that everyone abused him, and laughed him to scorn.

The man might declare ever so often that he not only did not wish to spread the weeds, but on the contrary saw the destruction of weeds as one of the countryman's chief occupations, as the wise and good husbandman also had taught, whose words he was only recalling ; he could repeat it as often as he pleased, but people did not listen to him, since it was known once and for all that he was misinterpreting the words of the wise and good husbandman, or that he was a villain encouraging men not to exterminate weeds, but to protect and cultivate them.

A like fate was mine when I pointed to the commandment of the Gospels : Resist not evil by violence. This commandment Christ preached, and after him all his true disciples. But whether men overlooked the commandment, or did not understand it, or thought it too hard to obey, the commandment was the more completely forgotten the longer the time that passed. Men's lives grew farther and farther away from this commandment, and finally things came to the state they are now in, to the state where this commandment seems new, unheard-of, strange, nay foolish. And I suffered the same fate as the man who referred people to the ancient instruction of the wise and good husbandman, not to mow weeds, but to tear them out by the roots.

Just as the owners of the meadow purposely forgot that the advice was not that they should not destroy the weeds, but that they should destroy them in a reasonable fashion, and said, We will not listen to this man, he is a fool ; he tells us not to mow the weeds, he tells us to let them grow—just so, to my warning that according to Christ's teaching evil must not be resisted by violence, but destroyed root and branch by love, people replied, We will not hear what he says. He is a fool ; he counsels us not to resist evil, that evil may overpower us.

I had said that according to Christ's teaching evil must

not be driven out with evil ; that all resistance by violence merely increases the evil ; that according to Christ's teaching evil is destroyed only by good. Bless them that curse you, pray for them which despitefully use you, do good to them that hate you, love your enemies : *then ye shall have no enemy.*

I had said that according to Christ's teaching man's whole life is but a struggle with evil, combating evil by reason and love. But among all the means of combat Christ excludes the one unreasonable means of combating evil by violence, which consists of resisting evil with evil.

And these my words were understood as if I had said Christ taught that we must not resist evil. And all those whose life is built upon violence, and to whom therefore violence is precious, seized gladly upon such a twisting of my words and thus of the words of Christ ; and it was generally maintained that the teaching, Resist not evil, is a wrong, foolish, godless and altogether dangerous teaching. And men go calmly on begetting evil under pretext of destroying it.

Second Parable

Men dealt in flour, butter, milk, and all sorts of other victuals. Each man wanted to profit more than the next and to grow rich as fast as possible ; and so they began to mix all sorts of cheap and harmful ingredients into their wares ; they poured clay and lime into the flour, they put margarine in the butter, water and chalk in the milk. So long as the victuals did not reach the hands of the purchasers, all went well ; the merchants sold their goods to the shopkeepers, and the shopkeepers to the pedlers.

There were many warehouses and shops, trade seemed to be successful, and the tradesmen were satisfied. But the purchasers in the city, who did not themselves produce

what they needed, and who thus had to buy everything, were unpleasantly affected, and found themselves in trouble.

The flour was bad—bad the butter and milk. But as there were no other victuals at the city market than these adulterated ones, the city purchasers went on accepting these goods, and attributed the bad taste and harmfulness of the food to themselves and to wrong preparation of what they ate. But the shopkeepers went on putting more and more cheap substances into their wares.

This went on for quite a long time ; the city-dwellers all suffered from it, but no one dared put his dissatisfaction into words.

Then there came a woman from the country, who had always provided for her family with home-made victuals. This woman had spent her whole life preparing food, and if she was not a first-rate cook, at any rate she knew how to bake bread and cook a good meal.

This woman bought victuals in the city, and began to bake and to cook. The bread would not bake properly, and fell apart. The pancakes, baked in margarine, tasted ill ; if the woman set milk to stand, no cream rose. The woman suspected at once that the materials were bad, so she examined them carefully, and her suspicion was confirmed : in the flour she found lime ; in the butter, margarine ; in the milk, chalk. When she had made sure that all the victuals were bad, she went to the shop, and scolded the shopkeepers roundly, and demanded that they either keep good, wholesome, unspoiled stock or give up business and close their shops. But the shopkeepers paid no attention to the woman, telling her the whole city had been buying from them for many years, and they had even received distinctions for their wares ; and they pointed to the medals on their shop-signs.

The woman did not yield. "I need no medals," she

said ; " I need good victuals, so that when my children and I eat we will not have stomachache."

" Why, gammer, probably you have never in your life seen real flour and real butter," said the shopkeepers, showing her the clear, white-looking flour in the lacquered bin, the wretched imitation of butter which stood in the handsome dishes and the white liquid in the shiny, transparent containers.

" I do know what it is," replied the woman, " because all my life I have done nothing but get my own food, and eat it with my children. Your goods are spoiled. Here is the proof," she said, showing them the spoiled bread, the margarine in the pancakes and the layer at the bottom of the milk. " Your goods ought to be thrown in the river or burned, and proper things used instead."

And the woman stood in front of the shop, and would not stop shouting. She told the same thing to every passing customer, and the customers began to grow suspicious.

The shopkeepers saw that the bold woman might hurt their trade, and they said to the customers : " Look, good people, at this crazy woman ; she wants people to starve. She wants all the footstuffs thrown in the river or burned up. What will you eat if we do what she says, and sell you no more victuals ? Don't listen to her ; she is an ignorant countrywoman who knows nothing about footstuffs, and who is attacking us out of envy. Because she is poor she wants everyone else to be as poor as she."

Thus the shopkeepers talked to the crowd that had collected, concealing the fact that the woman wanted not to destroy the foodstuffs, but to have good ones instead of bad.

Then the crowd fell upon the woman and began to abuse her. The woman might repeat as often as she liked that she did not want to destroy the food supply, but that on the contrary she had spent her whole life preparing

food for others and for herself, that she demanded only that people who have undertaken to supply their fellow-men shall not poison them with harmful things which they offer as food. No matter how much she talked or what she said, people did not listen, for it was settled that she wanted to rob men of their necessary food.

A like fate befell me and my views on the science and art of our time. I have fed for a lifetime on this food, and have taken pains when I could to feed others with it, well or badly. And since to me they are food, and not an object of trade or amusement, I know beyond a doubt when the food is food, and when it merely looks like food. And when I had tasted the food sold at the market of science and art in our time, and had tried to feed my dear ones on it, I realized that the greater part of the food was false. And when I said that the science and art which the dealers sell at the intellectual market were margarine, or at least adulterated with things foreign to true science and true art, and that I knew it because the products I had bought at the intellectual market were indigestible, nay downright harmful, to me and mine—when I said this, people began to scold and abuse me, and din into my ears that it was because I was unlearned, and did not know how to deal with such exalted things. But when I began to prove that the people who deal in these intellectual wares are constantly accusing one another of fraud, when I reminded them that all sorts of harmful and bad things have always been offered to men under the name of science and art, and that there was great danger thence in our day as well, that it was a deadly serious matter—that intellectual poison is a thousand times more dangerous than physical poison, and that untellectual products offered us as food must therefore be tested with utmost care, and everything counterfeit and harmful carefully rejected—when I said this, nobody, not a soul wrote a single statement or book to disprove

my words. But the people in the shops shouted at me as at the woman : " He is a fool ! He wants to destroy science and art, the things we live on. Beware of him, and do not listen to him ! Come to us, to us ! We have the latest foreign goods."

Third Parable

Wanderers were travelling the road. Then it happened that they got off the track, and the path where they had now to walk was no longer smooth ; it led through swamps, through bushes, among thorns, over logs blocking the path ; and progress grew harder and harder.

Then the wanderers broke up into two groups : one decided to press on, always in the direction they were now going. They told themselves and the others that they had never strayed from the right direction, and were sure to arrive at the goal of their journey. The second group decided, since the direction in which they were now moving was plainly wrong—otherwise they would long since have arrived where they were going—that they must hunt for the road. But to hunt for it, they must keep on going as fast as possible in every direction. The wanderers therefore divided according to the two opinions : some decided to press ahead, some decided to go forward in all directions. There was but one man who agreed with neither opinion. He said that before they went on in the same direction as before, or began to hurry in all directions in hope of finding the right road, they must stand still, think over the situation and—after thinking it over—undertake one course or the other. But the travellers were so excited by their wanderings and so alarmed by their situation, they wanted so much to console themselves with the hope that they were not lost, but had only briefly got off the road and would soon find it ; and above all

they wanted so much to dull their fear by going on, that both groups generally received the man's opinion with displeasure, reproaches and scorn. This advice is the part of weakness, of cowardice, of laziness, said one party.

A fine way to reach where we are going, by stopping here and not going on ! said others. That is what it means to be a man ; that is why we are given strength to fight and to achieve, to overcome obstacles instead of timidly succumbing, said yet others.

The one man who had separated from the majority might declare never so often that progress in the wrong direction certainly would bring them not nearer to but farther from their goal, and that wavering from one side to another would not bring them there either ; and that the only way of reaching the goal was to read their course from the sun and stars, and then to follow that course ; and that to do this they must first stop—stop not to stand still, but to find the right path and then to go consistently forward by that path ; but that to do either they must first stop and think. No matter how often he said this, no one listened to him.

And the first group of travellers marched on in the direction they had been going. The second party went aimlessly from one side to another ; but neither came any nearer to their common goal. In fact they never got out of the thickets and thorns, and are straying about among them still.

A precisely similar fate was mine when I tried to express my doubt that the way which had led us into the dark forest of the labour question and the bog of endless armaments that threatens to engulf us could possibly be the road which we ought to travel, and my belief that it is highly probable we have got off the right road, and that we ought therefore to interrupt our wanderings, which evidently are leading us astray, and above all to ask our-

selves whether, judging by the universal and eternal basis of revealed truth, we are going in the direction we intended.

Nobody had an answer to this question. Nobody said, "We are not mistaken in our direction, we are not wandering aimlessly, we are sure of it for such-and-such reasons." Not a soul said, "We may have gone astray, but we have an unfailing means of making good our mistakes without stopping on the way." Nobody said any of this. But they all flew into a rage, and pretended to be deeply hurt, and hastened with loud outcry to drown my lone voice. "We are weary and tired enough," they said, "and here comes a man to preach inertia, idleness, non-action!" Some even added, "Inaction!" "Do not listen to him—forward, follow us!" yelled both parties—those who believed salvation was in going on in the same direction, no matter which, as well as those who saw as salvation an aimless progress in all directions.

Why stand still? Why think? Hurry on! It will all come right.

Mankind has got off the road, and is suffering for it. You would think that the first and most important effort to be made must be not a hastening of the advance which has brought us to our present ill situation, but a halt. You would think it should be plain that only a halt could allow us to understand our situation and find the course we must take to reach true happiness, not of individuals, not of a group, but true, general happiness of mankind, which all men and every man's heart are striving after.

And what happens?

Men consider every imaginable idea except the one thing that can save them, or if not save them, then at least relieve their situation—to wit, that they pause at least for a moment, and do not go on increasing their troubles by misdirected activity. Men feel the unhappiness of their situation, and are trying every means of escape. But the one thing which

surely can relieve them they will not do at any price, and the advice to do it embitters them more than anything else could.

If there were still any possible doubt that we have gone astray, men's attitude toward the warning that they should bethink themselves would prove more clearly than anything else could how hopelessly astray we are, and how great is our despair.

KING ASSARHADON

ASSARHADON, King of Assyria, had conquered the kingdom of King La-i-li-e, sacked and burned all the cities, forcibly carried off all the inhabitants into his own country, killed the warriors, and put King Lailie in a cage.

As King Assarhadon lay upon his couch at night, he considered how he should put Lailie to death. Suddenly he heard a sound near him. He opened his eyes, and saw an ancient man with a long grey beard and gentle eyes.

"You wish to execute Lailie?" asked the ancient man.

"Yes," replied the king. "Only I have not yet thought out the way by which I shall put him to death."

"But you are Lailie yourself," said the ancient man.

"That's not true," said the king. "I am I, and Lailie is Lailie."

"You and Lailie are one," said the ancient man. "You are mistaken if you believe you are not Lailie and Lailie is not you."

"I am mistaken?" said the king. "I am not lying here on a soft couch, surrounded by slaves that do my bidding? Shall I not feast with my friends to-morrow as I have to-day, while Lailie sits like a bird in a cage, and to-morrow will writhe on the stake with outstretched tongue until he dies and the dogs rend his carcass?"

"You cannot destroy his life," said the ancient man.

"And the forty thousand warriors I killed and piled into a hill?" said the king. "I live, and they are no more. You see I am able to destroy life."

"How do you know that they are no more?"

"I do not see them. But chiefly, they suffered agony, and I do not. Their fate was evil, and mine is good."

"There too you are wrong. You have caused yourself agony, not them."

"I do not understand you," said the king.

"Do you want to understand?"

"Yes, I do."

"Come over to this," said the ancient man, pointing to a basin of water.

The king got up, and went over to the basin.

"Undress, and step into the basin."

Assarhadon did as the ancient man bade him.

"And now, as soon as I begin to pour this water over you," said the ancient man, dipping up water in a bowl, "plunge your head under."

The ancient man tipped the bowl above the king's head, and the king plunged under.

Hardly had King Assarhadon plunged under when he felt he was not Assarhadon, but someone else; and at the moment when he felt himself someone else, he saw he was lying on a rich couch, with a beautiful woman beside him. He had never seen this woman before, but he knew it was his wife, and the woman arose, and said to him, "Lailie, my dear husband, you are tired from the hardships of the last few days, and so you have slept longer than usual; but I have kept watch over your slumber, and not awakened you. But now the princes are awaiting you in the great hall. Put on your clothes, and go out to them."

From these words Assarhadon realized that he was Lailie. He was not surprised; he was surprised only that he had

not known it before. And he arose, dressed himself, and went into the great hall, where the princes awaited him.

The princes greeted Lailie, their king, with deep obeisances ; they then stood erect, and upon his command took their seats before him. And the oldest of the princes began to speak : The insults of the wicked King Assarhadon could no longer be tolerated, and war must be declared.

But Lailie did not agree. He ordered envoys sent to Assarhadon to appeal to his conscience ; and Lailie dismissed the princes. Then he named some of the nobles as envoys, and impressed upon them all the details of the message they were to take from him to King Assarhadon.

When this was done, Assarhadon, who felt he was Lailie, went into the mountains to hunt wild asses. Fortune smiled upon him ; he himself killed two asses, and then he turned homeward, feasted with his friends, and watched the dances of the slave girls.

The following day, according to his custom, he went down into the courtyard, where petitioners, defendants, and plaintiffs awaited him, and he held court. Then he went out again to the chase, his favourite amusement ; and that day he succeeded in killing an old lioness, and taking her two cubs.

After the chase he banqueted again with his friends, enjoyed music and dances, and spent the evening with his beloved wife.

So days passed, and weeks. He waited for the return of the envoys he had sent to King Assarhadon, the man he once had been.

The envoys came back at last after a month, with noses and ears cut off.

King Assarhadon sent word to Lailie that what had happened to his envoys should happen also to him if he did not forthwith send a certain tribute in silver, gold and

cypress-wood, and if he did not appear in order to do homage himself.

Lailie, who once had been Assarhadon, again convoked the princes, and took counsel with them what was to be done. All were agreed that they must not wait for Assarhadon's attack, but must invade his country. The king agreed, put himself at the head of his army, and took the field. They were seven days on the way ; daily the king reviewed his army, and fanned the spirit of his warriors.

On the eighth day his army met with Assarhadon's in the broad valley on the banks of the river. Lailie's troops fought bravely, but Lailie (who once had been Assarhadon) saw the enemy coming down like ants from the mountains, over-running the valleys and overpowering his army. He flung himself in his war-chariot into the thick of the battle, thrusting and slashing at the enemy. But Lailie's warriors were hundreds, and Assarhadon's were thousands, and Lailie felt himself wounded and taken prisoner.

For nine days he marched, chained to other prisoners, amid the warriors of Assarhadon. On the tenth day he was brought to Nineveh, and put in a cage. Lailie suffered torments of hunger and aching wounds, but greater yet was the torment of his humiliation and his impotent rage. He felt himself powerless to repay his enemy for all the evil he had suffered.

One thing only he could do : he need not give his enemy the pleasure of seeing his suffering ; and so he took the manly resolve to bear without complaining whatever might happen to him.

For twenty days he sat in the cage, waiting for execution. He saw his relatives and friends led to the place of execution, he heard the groans of those whose hands and feet were struck off, or who were flayed alive, and he showed neither

uneasiness nor pity nor fear. He saw the eunuchs leading his beloved wife away in chains; he knew they were taking her as a slave to Assarhadon. And that too he bore without complaint.

But then two executors opened the cage, bound his hands behind him with a strap, and led him to the blood-soaked place of execution. He saw the sharp, bloody stake from which the body of his friend had just been torn off, and he knew they had freed the stake only to execute him.

His clothes were taken off. Lailie shuddered at the emaciation of his once so strong and handsome body.

Two executioners seized this body by the hips, lifted it, and made ready to drop it on the stake.

Death is before me, annihilation! thought Lailie. He forgot his resolve to maintain a manly calm to the end. He sobbed, and asked to be spared. But no one heard him.

But this is impossible, he thought, I must be asleep. This is a dream. And he made a violent movement to wake up. And after all I am not Lailie, he thought, I am Assarhadon.

"You are Lailie, and you are Assarhadon," he heard a voice say, and he felt that the execution was beginning. He screamed, and raised his head from the basin. The ancient man was bent over him, pouring the last water out of the bowl over his head.

"What fearful tortures have I suffered! And how long!" said Assarhadon.

"How long?" asked the ancient man. "You only put your head under, and lifted it again straightway. See—the water in the bowl is not quite poured out. Do you understand now?"

Assarhadon answered not a word, but only looked at the ancient man in horror.

"Do you understand now," the ancient man went on, "that Lailie and you are one, and that the warriors whom

you delivered up to death are one with you, and not only the warriors, but the animals you killed in the chase and ate at your feasts? You thought that you alone had life, but I tore away the veil of error, and you saw that you did to yourself all the evil you did unto others. There is one life in everyone, and you alone are but a part of that life. And only in that one part of life, in you, can you improve or harm life, enlarge it or make it less. You can improve the life in you only by tearing down the barriers that divide your life from that of other beings, by considering the other beings as yourself, and loving them. But to destroy the life in other beings is not within your power. The life of the beings you have killed is gone from your sight, but it has not ceased to be. You believed you were making your own life longer and the life of the others shorter; but this you are not able to do. For life, neither time nor space exists. Life is a moment, and life is a thousand years, and your life and the life of every visible and invisible creature in the world is one. We can neither destroy life nor transform it, for there is but one life. All else is error."

Thus spoke the ancient man, and vanished.

The next morning King Assarhadon ordered that Lailie and all the prisoners be set free, and he let no one further be executed.

And on the next day after, he called his son, Assurbanipal, and surrendered the throne to him; he himself retired to the desert, and meditated upon what he had learned. But then he wandered as a pilgrim through cities and villages, preaching to men that all life is one, and that men only do themselves hurt when they think to harm another.

WHAT MEN LIVE BY

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. (I John iii. 14.)

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? (iii. 17.)

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. (iii. 18.)

Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. (iv. 7.)

No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. (iv. 12.)

God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. (iv. 16.)

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? (iv. 20.)

I

There was once a shoemaker, who lived with his wife and children in a peasant's house.

He had neither house nor land, and he kept himself and his family by the work of his hands.

Bread was dear and work was cheap, and what he earned he ate up.

Man and wife had only one sheepskin coat between them, and even that was ragged and torn; and for two years the shoemaker had intended to buy sheepskins for a new one.

When autumn came upon the land, the shoemaker had gathered a little sum of money: three roubles his wife had in her drawer, and the peasants in the village owed him five roubles and twenty kopecks.

So the shoemaker went into the village early in the

morning to buy the skins. He put on his wife's quilted cotton jacket over his shirt, his cloth caftan over that, thrust the three-rouble note into his pocket, broke off a staff, and marched off after breakfast to the village. Five roubles I shall get from the peasants, he thought; I will put them together with my three, and buy sheepskins for the coat.

The shoemaker came to the village, and went to one of the peasants. The man was not at home. The peasant's wife promised to send her husband with the money within the week, but she gave the shoemaker nothing. He went to a second peasant. This one swore by all that was holy that he had no money, and he merely paid twenty kopecks for a bit of cobbling. Then the shoemaker thought he would take the sheepskins on credit, but on credit the tanner would give him nothing.

"Just you bring the money," said he, "and you can pick out what you please. I know how a man has to run after his debts."

So the shoemaker had to turn back empty-handed; he had only the twenty kopecks for the bit of cobbling, and had taken along from a peasant some old felt boots to be soled.

In his annoyance the shoemaker spent the whole twenty kopecks on brandy and went home without a sheepskin. In the early morning he had been cold; now, after the brandy, he felt warm even without a sheepskin. And so the shoemaker went his way, striking the frozen pebbles with the staff in one hand, waving the felt boots back and forth in the other hand, and talking to himself: "I am warm," he said, "even without a sheepskin. A glass or two hurries the blood through one's veins. What need of a sheepskin? I go my way, and forget my sorrows. That's my style. What more could I need? I need no sheepskin, and never shall, my whole life long. The only

bad thing—the old woman will grumble. And it's insulting, that's what it is. You work yourself to the bone for him, and he leads you around by the nose. Stop—if you don't bring the money, I will take your cap; I swear to God I will take it from you. And what does he mean by giving me two ten-kopeck bits—what am I to do with twenty kopecks? At best I can have a drink. 'I'm in need,' he says. You're in need—am I not in need? You have a house, you have cattle and a bit more, and I have only myself. You have your own bread; I have to buy it—I may get it where I can. Bread alone costs me three roubles every week. When I get home the bread will be gone, and I shall have to put out a rouble and a half again. You will have to give me what you owe me."

And so the shoemaker came to the chapel at the corner, and behind the chapel he saw something white glimmering. Dusk was falling; the shoemaker looked and looked, and could not make out what it might be. There has never been a stone there, he thought. Perhaps an animal? It doesn't look like an animal. The head looks like a man's head, but what can the white part be? And what would a man be doing here?

He went closer, and then he saw it plainly. How strange—a man was sitting there, living or dead, quite naked, leaning against the chapel, and not moving. The shoemaker shuddered. Someone must have been killed, and the murderers robbed him and left him lying here. If I go near him I may become involved in it.

And the shoemaker went on. When he turned the corner of the chapel, the man was no longer to be seen. He went on; then he looked back, and see there, the man had stopped leaning against the chapel, and was moving as if to watch something. The shoemaker was still more frightened. Shall I go up to him, he thought, or shall I

go on? If I go up to him, something may happen. Who can tell what he is? No good brought him here. If I go back to him, he may leap upon me and throttle me without mercy; and if he does not throttle me, what am I to do with him—what can one do with a naked man? Am I to tear the clothes from my body, and give them to him? I will go on!

And the shoemaker quickened his pace. He was well past the chapel when his conscience awoke.

He stopped. "What are you doing, Semyon?" he said to himself. "Here is a man dying in need, and you pass by like a coward. I suppose you have suddenly grown rich, and are afraid he will steal your riches? Semyon, for shame!"

And Semyon turned back, and went towards the man.

II

Semyon went towards the man, looked at him, and lo! it was a young man in the bloom of health, not a wound on his body—the man was only frozen and terrified; he sat there, leaning against the wall, and not looking at Semyon, as if he were too feeble to open his eyes. Semyon came close to him, and see there! Suddenly the man came to, turned his head, opened his eyes and looked at Semyon; and the look filled Semyon with love for the man. He flung his felt boots on the ground, took off the belt, laid the belt on the felt boots and took off his caftan.

"Here, take this," he said. "Don't thank me! Put it on—there, there." Semyon seized the man under the arms, and pulled him to his feet. The man stood up, and Semyon saw that his body was clean and tender, hands and feet uninjured, and his face sweet and kind. Semyon threw the caftan over the man's shoulders, but the man could not get into the sleeves. Semyon helped him put his

hands through, wrapped the caftan around him, buttoned it up, and buckled the belt around him.

Then Semyon took off his poor cap, intending to put it on the naked man's head ; but his own head grew cold. Wait, he thought, my head is quite bald, and he has long, curly hair. So he put his cap back on. I had better give him my boots instead.

He sat the man down, and put his felt boots on him.

When the shoemaker had dressed him thus, he said, "Now, brother, bestir yourself, and try to get warm. The matter will be cleared up without us. Can you walk?"

The man did not move ; he looked lovingly at Semyon, and could not get out a word.

"Why don't you say something? We can't spend the winter here. We must find a place to stay. Here, take my staff to lean on, if you are weak. Now hurry along."

And the man walked, and he walked easily, as fast as his companion.

As they were striding along in this fashion, Semyon said : "Where might you come from?"

"I'm not from this village."

"I know the people from the village. How did you happen to come to the chapel?"

"I can't tell you."

"Did somebody do you a hurt?"

"Nobody has done me any harm ; it was God who punished me."

"Of course ; everything comes from God, but even so you cannot exist without a roof over your head. Whither does your path lead?"

"It is all the same to me."

Semyon was puzzled : the man does not look like a ruffian, and he speaks gently, but he says not a word of himself. And Semyon thought, That happens often in

this world, and he said to the man : " Listen," he said, " come to my house, and at least you can rest a little."

Semyon went towards his house. The stranger kept pace with him, walking beside him. Meanwhile the wind had risen, and it blew sharply under Semyon's tunic. His drunkenness was gradually blown away, and he felt chilled. And so he walked into the wind, breathing loudly, wrapping himself close in the woman's jacket, and thinking : Now I've done it. I go out to buy a sheepskin, and come back without a caftan, and bring back the naked man besides. The old woman won't be best pleased ! And when he thought of his wife, Semyon grew uneasy. But when he looked at the stranger he remembered how the man had looked at him behind the chapel, and his heart bounded with joy.

III

Semyon's wife had got the house ready early. She had chopped wood, fetched water, fed the children, eaten her own meal ; now she was considering. She was considering when she should put the bread in the oven—to-day or to-morrow ? There was still a big piece of bread left.

If Semyon eats in the village at noon, she thought, and doesn't eat much for supper, the bread will last until to-morrow.

Matryona turned the chunk of bread in her hands, and thought : I won't put the loaves in the oven to-day. There isn't much flour left anyway. It will do until Friday. Matryona put the bread aside, and sat down at the table to mend her husband's shirt. As she sewed, she thought of her husband buying sheepskins for the coat.

If only the tanner doesn't cheat him. He really is too simple, my old man. He would never cheat anyone. But any child could lead him around by the nose. Eight

roubles is a lot of money ; it ought to buy a fine sheepskin. Even if it isn't tanned, it can still be a good sheepskin. Last winter we did without a sheepskin. We couldn't go to the river, or anywhere. And if my husband went out he had to put on everything. Even to-day he put on everything when he went, and I hadn't a stitch left. He went early ; it's time he was home. If only my bird has not got entangled somewhere !

As she was thinking this, the doorsteps creaked, and a man came in. Matryona stuck her needle into the shirt, and went into the hall. Look, there were two men—Semyon, and with him a man in felt boots, with no cap.

Matryona noticed at once the smell of brandy which her husband gave off. Well, she thought, I was right enough ; he got entangled. And as she saw that he had come without his caftan, in the jacket alone, and had brought nothing with him, and said not a word, and looked shamefaced, Matryona's heart stood still. He has drunk up the money, she thought. He's been to the tavern with the first vagabond he met, and on top of it all he's brought him home.

Matryona let them come into the room. She came in herself, and saw that the stranger was a lean man, wearing the caftan that belonged to her and her husband. There was no shirt to be seen under the caftan, and he wore no cap either. He stood as he had come in, not stirring or raising his eyes. He can't be an honest man, thought Matryona, if he's so shamefaced.

Matryona gave a black look, and went over to the stove to await what the two might do.

Semyon took off his cap, and sat down on the bench as if nothing had happened.

"Go on, Matryona," he said, "get some supper ready."

Matryona growled something to herself. She stood by the stove without stirring a finger. She simply looked first at one, then at the other, and shook her head. He

pretended to notice nothing, and took the stranger by the hand.

"Sit down, brother," he said. "We'll have supper."

The stranger sat down on the bench.

"Well, haven't you cooked anything?"

Matryona flew into a passion. "I've cooked, but not for you. You've guzzled away your wits, I see. You go out to buy a sheepskin, and come home without a coat; and you drag a naked tramp into my house besides. I have no supper for you drunkards."

"Go on, Matryona, what nonsense are you talking? First you should ask who the man—"

"And you tell me what you did with the money."

Semyon put his hand into the caftan, took out the note, and unfolded it.

"Here is the money, and Trifonov didn't pay; he put me off till to-morrow."

At this Matryona flew into a still greater passion. "You didn't buy the sheepskin, and you put your last caftan on this pauper, and bring him into my house."

So saying, she reached for the three-rouble note, which lay on the table, put it in the drawer, and said: "I have no supper; I can't feed every naked drunkard I see."

"Hey, Matryona, don't let your tongue go so. Listen to what a person tells you. . . ."

"Fine stuff such a drunken fool would talk. I know why I didn't want to marry you, you toper. Mother gave me linen, and you drank it up. You go to the village to buy a sheepskin, and you get drunk."

Semyon tried to explain to his wife that he had spent only twenty kopecks for drink. He tried to tell her where he had met the man. But Matryona would not let him get in a word; her tongue clattered like a mill-wheel. She threw up at him stories from ten years back.

And Matryona talked and talked. Finally she flew at

Semyon, and grabbed him by the sleeve: "Give me my jacket. One jacket I have left, and that you take away and put on. Give it here, you knave. A pox on you."

Semyon tried to take off the kazavaika, and turned the sleeves in doing so. His wife yanked it off him, and the kazavaika cracked in every seam. Matryona pulled the jacket away, threw it over her head, and ran to the door. She started to go out, but stopped. Her heart was bursting with rage, but still she wanted to know who the strange fellow was.

So Matryona stopped to say: "If that were a good man, he would not be naked. He hasn't even a shirt on his back. And if you had not done something you should not, you would say where you found such a grand gentleman."

"But that's what I am trying to say. I was going along, and there was this man, naked and frozen, sitting by the chapel. This isn't summer, when you would sit there naked. God put me in the man's way, or it would have been the end of him. What's to do? It happens often enough! I take him, dress him, and bring him along. Calm yourself. It's sinful, Matryona. Think of the hour of death."

Matryona was about to start scolding, when her eye lit on the stranger, and she fell silent. The stranger sat there motionless. He sat still on the edge of the bench, just as he had first sat down, his hands folded on his knees, his head sunk on his chest, his eyes closed, his brows drawn together as if something were hurting him. Matryona did not speak a word.

But Semyon said: "Matryona, have you no God in you?"

Matryona heard him, looked at the stranger again, and suddenly her heart was moved. She left the door, went to the stove corner, and fetched supper. She put the dishes on the table, poured some kvass, and brought the last piece of bread.

"Now eat," she said.

Semyon moved the stranger closer. "Come nearer, good friend," he said.

Semyon cut up the bread, and dipped it ; and they began to eat. Matryona sat at the corner of the table, her head in her hand, looking at the stranger.

And Matryona was seized with pity for the stranger, and he began to please her. Suddenly the stranger relaxed his brows, and grew cheerful ; he fixed his eyes on Matryona, and smiled.

Supper was over. Matryona cleared up, and began to question the stranger.

"Where are you from ?"

"I don't come from here."

"What brought you here ?"

"That I cannot say."

"Who robbed you ?"

"God punished me."

"You lay there naked like that ?"

"Yes, I lay like that, naked and freezing. Then Semyon saw me, took pity on me, took off his caftan, and put it on me, and then he told me to come with him. And here you gave me to eat and drink, and had pity on me. May God reward you."

Matryona stood up, took from the window Semyon's old shirt which she had been mending, and handed it to the stranger. She also found trousers, and gave them to him.

"Here. I see you have not even a shirt. Put it on, and go to sleep. Where you like, on the bench or on the stove."

The stranger took off the caftan, put on the shirt, and lay down on the bench. Matryona put out the light, took the caftan, and crept close to her husband.

Matryona covered herself with one end of the caftan, but she lay awake. She could not get the stranger out of her mind.

When she remembered that she had eaten up the last bit of bread, and that there was not a scrap left for to-morrow, when she thought that she had given away shirt and trousers, she felt unhappy ; but when she remembered how he had smiled, her heart leaped with joy.

For a long time Matryona lay sleepless, and then she could hear that Semyon was not asleep either, and was pulling the caftan over toward himself.

" Semyon."

" Eh ? "

" We ate up the last bit of bread, and I didn't put any in the stove. I don't know what we shall do to-morrow. I shall have to fetch some from the old woman next door."

" If we are alive, we shall have something to eat."

She lay still again, saying nothing.

" He seems to be an honest man after all. Odd, though, that he says nothing at all about himself ? "

" Probably he mustn't."

" Sem."

" Eh ? "

" We give to others, but why does no one give to us ? "

Semyon did not know what to say to this. " Do stop your talking," he said. He rolled over, and went to sleep.

V

The next morning Semyon woke up. The children were asleep ; his wife had gone to the neighbours to borrow bread. Only the stranger of yesterday was sitting on the bench in the old trousers and shirt, looking upward. And his face was brighter than the day before.

And Semyon said : " Listen, my friend, the body demands bread, the naked limbs clothing. Man must eat. What kind of work can you do ? "

" I can't do anything."

Semyon was surprised, and said : " If a person only wants to. Anything can be learned."

" Men work ; then I shall work also."

" What shall I call you ? "

" Michael."

" Very well, Michael. You will tell me nothing of yourself. But a man must eat. You shall do the work I give you, and then I will give you something to eat."

" May God reward you. I can learn. Show me what I am to do."

Semyon took thread, wound it around his fingers, and made a knot.

" It is no great secret. Watch. . . ."

Michael watched, wound thread around his fingers just as the shoemaker did, and made a knot.

Then Semyon showed him how the welt is made. That too Michael understood at once. Then the master showed him how to weave in the bristles, and how to use the awl, and that too Michael immediately understood.

Every process that Semyon showed him he learned at once, and after the third day he began to work as if he had sewed shoes all his life. He worked without stirring from the spot, and ate little. If there was no work, he would sit by the hour, looking upward. He did not leave the room, did not speak an unnecessary word, did not joke and did not laugh.

Only once had they seen him laugh ; that was on the first evening, when the woman had got supper for him.

VI

Day after day passed, week after week ; a whole year had passed. And Michael stayed in Semyon's house, working.

The fame of Semyon's workman had spread every-

where. Nobody, people said, made such neat and durable boots as Semyon's workman, Michael. And people came from far around to order boots from Semyon, and Semyon's prosperity grew and grew.

There came one day in winter. Semyon and Michael were sitting at work when a little carriage, drawn by three horses, drove up with jingling bells before Semyon's house. They looked out of the window. The carriage stopped; a young fellow jumped down from the box, and opened the door. A gentleman in a fur coat got out of the carriage. He got out of the carriage, came towards Semyon's cottage and up the steps. Matryona rushed to meet him, and flung the door wide. The gentleman stooped, came into the room and straightened up again. His head almost touched the ceiling, and he filled the whole corner of the room.

Semyon got up, bowed and looked at the gentleman in astonishment. Never had he seen such a man. Semyon himself was lean, Michael was spare and Matryona was as thin as a shaving; but this man looked like one from another world. His face was red and bloated, his neck like a bull's, his whole figure as if cast in iron.

The gentleman stopped to catch his breath. He took off his fur coat, sat down on the bench and said: "Who is the master shoemaker?"

Semyon stepped up, and said: "I am, Your Grace."

Then the gentleman called to his man, "Hey, Fedya, bring the leather here."

The man came up with a bundle. The gentleman took the bundle, and put it on the table.

"Open it," he said. The man opened the bundle.

The gentleman touched the leather with one finger, and said to Semyon, "Listen, shoemaker, do you see the leather?"

"Certainly, Your Honour," he said.

"Yes, and do you understand what sort of leather it is?"

Semyon felt the leather, and said, "Wonderful leather."

"I should hope so! Certainly you never saw such leather before, bumpkin. It is German leather, and cost twenty roubles."

Semyon, overawed, said: "Where would anyone like me see such leather?"

"Of course not! Can you make boots to fit my foot out of this leather?"

"Yes, indeed, Your Grace."

At this the gentleman shouted at him: "It's easy for you to *talk*. Remember whom you are working for, and what sort of leather that is. Make me a pair of boots that wear for a year without splitting or wearing crooked. If you can do that, go to work and cut the leather; if you can't, let it be, and don't cut up the leather. I tell you now that if the shoes split or wear crooked before a year is past, I shall put you in prison. If they do not split or wear crooked, I will give you ten roubles for your work."

Semyon grew alarmed. He did not know what to say. He looked at Michael.

He nudged him, and asked in a low voice: "Shall I take it?"

Michael nodded, Have no fear—just take the work.

Semyon obeyed his workman, and undertook to make boots that would go a year without wearing crooked or splitting.

The gentleman called his man, and told him to take off the left boot. Then he stretched out his foot.

"Take my measure."

Semyon took a strip of paper half an ell long, knelt down, wiped his hand carefully on his apron so as not to dirty the gentleman's stocking, and began to take his

measure. First Semyon measured the sole, then he measured the instep. Then he started to measure the calf; his paper was not long enough. The gigantic foot had a calf like a great beam.

"Take care that you don't make it too tight in the leg."

Semyon sewed another piece to the paper strip. The gentleman sat there, moving his toes in his stocking, and looking at the people in the room. Then he noticed Michael.

"Who is that," he said, "that you have there?"

"That is my master shoemaker; he will work on the boots too."

"Take heed," said the gentleman to Michael, "don't forget that the boots must wear for a year."

Semyon too looked around at Michael, and saw that Michael did not so much as look at the gentleman. He stood in the corner behind the gentleman, and seemed to have his eyes fixed on someone. Michael stood there, staring fixedly; suddenly he smiled, and his whole face beamed.

"What are you standing there grinning for, bumpkin? You had better take care instead that the boots are ready in time."

And Michael answered: "They will be ready exactly on time."

"I should hope so!"

Now the gentleman put the boot on again, wrapped himself warmly in his fur and went to the door. But he forgot to stoop, and bumped the beam over the door with his head.

He cursed and rubbed his forehead. Then he got into the carriage, and drove off.

When the gentleman was gone, Semyon said: "A man of iron. The club is not made that would kill him."

He almost brings down the beam with his head, and it scarcely hurts him."

But Matryona said: "With a life like theirs, why shouldn't those people be strong? Not even death can touch a great hulk like that."

VII

And Semyon said to Michael: "Well, we've taken the work; if only we haven't loaded a cross on our own backs. That leather is precious, and there is no joking with the gentleman. We must not cut the leather wrong. You do it—you have a sharper eye and more skilful hands; here's the pattern. You cut the leather, and in the meantime I will go on with the toe-caps."

Michael did as the master told him, took the gentleman's leather, spread it out on the table, laid one piece on the other, took up his knife and began to cut.

Matryona came over to look on. She saw Michael using the shears, and was puzzled to know what he was doing. Matryona knew the work of shoemaking; she looked and saw that Michael was not cutting the leather in shoemaker fashion, but was going round the edge with the shears.

Matryona was about to say something. But, she thought, perhaps I don't understand how you make shoes for a gentleman. Perhaps Michael knows better; I won't interfere.

Michael cut the pair. Then he took a thread, and began to sew—not with two threads, as shoemakers do, but with a single one, as if to sew burial shoes.

This too puzzled Matryona, but she did not want to interfere. And Michael sewed and sewed. They ate supper; then Semyon stood up, and saw that Michael had made burial shoes out of the gentleman's leather.

Semyon groaned aloud. How can this be? he thought. A whole year Michael has been with me, and has never made a mistake, and now he has caused a disaster like this. The gentleman ordered top boots with stitched soles, and Michael has made burial shoes with no soles, and ruined the leather. How can I make my peace with the gentleman? We'll not find such leather again.

"What have you done?" he said. "Good friend, you will be the death of me! The gentleman ordered boots, and what have you done?"

Hardly had the master begun to reproach Michael when the door-knocker went: Rap, rap! They looked out of the window. A horseman was there, just hitching his horse. They opened the door, and in came the gentleman's man.

"Good day."

"Good day. What news?"

"The mistress sent me about the boots."

"What about the boots?"

"What about the boots? The master needs no boots. The master wishes you a long life."

"What did you say?"

"He did not live to reach home from here; he died in the carriage. When the carriage drove up in front of the house, and we got down to help him out, he was lying there like a sack; dead and stiff he lay there. We could scarcely lug him out of the carriage. So the mistress sent me here: 'Tell the shoemaker,' she said, 'there must have been a gentleman to see you who ordered boots and left the leather. Tell him the boots are not needed now, and he is to cut burial shoes for the dead man out of the leather as quickly as possible; and you wait there until they are cut, and bring the burial shoes back with you.' So I came here."

Michael took the leather remnants from the table,

rolled them up, took the finished burial shoes, slapped the two together, wiped them with his apron and handed them to the man. The man took the burial shoes.

"Farewell, and a good day to you."

VIII

A year passed, a second year ; and soon it was six years since Michael had come to live in Semyon's house. His life was the same as ever. He went nowhere, never spoke an unnecessary word, and in the whole time they had never seen him smile but twice—once when the woman gave him his supper, the second time when the gentleman came. Semyon was immensely satisfied with his journeyman. He never asked him any more where he came from ; his only fear was that Michael might want to leave him.

Then one day they were sitting at home. The housewife put the iron pot on the fire ; the children were running around on the benches, and looking out of the window. Semyon was sitting by one window, hammering, and Michael was sitting by the other, working on a heel.

The little boy came running along the bench to Michael, leaned against his shoulder and looked through the window.

"Uncle Michael, look ! Isn't that shopkeeper's wife with the girls coming here ? And one of the girls is lame."

The boy had hardly spoken when Michael dropped his work, turned to the window and looked out at the street.

Semyon was astonished. Michael had never looked out at the road, and now he was pressed against the window to watch something outside. Then Semyon too went to the window : sure enough, a woman was coming toward his house. She was handsomely dressed, and was holding by the hands two girls dressed in little furs and embroidered kerchiefs. The girls were as like as two peas, so that one

could hardly tell them apart. But one of them had a lame left foot, and limped as she walked.

The woman came up the front steps into the hall, fumbled her way to the door, pressed the latch and opened. She let the girls go ahead of her.

"Good day, peasant ; good day, goodwife."

"Welcome to you. What is your pleasure ?"

The woman sat down at the table. The girls crept closer to her, for they were timid with the strange people.

"I would like little leather boots for the girls for spring."

"You can have them with pleasure. We have never made such small ones before, but we can do it all right. With tops or without tops, as you please. Michael can do anything."

Semyon glanced at Michael, and saw that he had thrown aside his work, and was sitting staring at the girls without stopping.

Semyon could not understand Michael at all. The girls were pretty, no doubt of that : little black eyes, round red cheeks, pretty little furs and kerchiefs. And Semyon could not understand why Michael stared so fixedly at them, as if he knew them.

Semyon was puzzled, and he began to bargain with the woman. They came to an agreement, and he took the measure. The woman lifted the lame girl to her lap, and said : "With this child you must measure twice, one shoe for the left foot, and three for the straight one. Their feet are just alike ; they are twins."

Semyon measured, and said, with a glance at the lame child, "How did that happen to her ? Such a pretty little girl, too. Was she born with it ?"

"No. Her mother crushed her."

Then Matryona came in. She wanted to know who the woman was, and whom the children belonged to, and she said, "Aren't you their mother ?"

"I am neither their mother nor any relation, goodwife ; they are foundling children."

"Not your own children, and you so fond of them?"

"How could I not be fond of them, when I fed them both at the breast? I had a child of my own, and God took it; I never loved it as I love these two."

"And whom do they belong to?"

IX

The woman grew talkative, and she explained: "It is six years ago," she said, "that the children were orphaned, all within a week. Their father was buried on Tuesday, and that Friday their mother died.

"My husband and I were peasants then. We were their neighbours in the village; we lived side by side. The children's father worked in the forest. One day a tree fell on him, straight across his body, so that his bowels flowed out.

"He was hardly brought home before he gave up the ghost, and that week his wife bore him twins, these girls here. All was misery and loneliness.

"The woman was quite alone, with no old people and no children; she was alone in her hour of need, and alone she died.

"The next day I went in to see my neighbour. When I came into the room the good woman was already cold and stiff, and in her death-agony she had sunk down on the little girl, and had crushed it and twisted its foot.

"Then people came in, washed her, dressed her, made a coffin, and buried her. The good people took care of everything. Now the little girls were alone; what was to become of them? I was the only one of all the women who had a child at the breast. I had been nursing my first-born boy for two months. So for the time being I

took them. The peasants met to discuss finding a home for them. 'Why don't you keep the girls for a while, Maria?' they said. 'Everything will come right in time.' First I gave the breast to the healthy child, and did not nurse this lame one. I thought it would not live long; but then I thought, why should the little angel die? I felt sorry for her, so I fed her too. I was nursing my own child and these two besides; all three grew up at this breast. I was young and strong, and the nourishment was plenty. God gave me so much milk that I had more than enough. It would happen that I satisfied two, and the third was waiting, and when one had enough, I took the third. But God willed that I should bring up these, and bury my own in his second year. And afterwards God gave me no more children. And our earthly goods increased. Now we live here in the mill with the shopkeeper. The pay is good, and we have no cares. And we have no children. How could I live alone if I did not have the girls? And how could I not love them? They are my only joy."

So saying, the woman hugged the lame girl with one hand, and wiped the tears from her cheeks with the other hand.

Matryona sighed and said: "The proverb is right. Man can live without father and mother, but without God he cannot live."

They were talking thus, when suddenly a bright light from the corner where Michael sat lit up the whole room. They all looked at him. Michael was sitting with his hands folded in his lap, his eyes turned smilingly upward.

X

The woman with the girls had gone. Then Michael too got up from the bench, took off his apron, bowed before his master and mistress, and said: "Forgive me,

master and goodwife. God has forgiven me ; pray do you forgive me also."

And the master and his wife saw that the light came from Michael. He stood up. Semyon bowed before Michael, and said to him : " Michael, I see that you are no ordinary mortal, and I may not keep you, and I may not question you, but tell me one thing : why were you so gloomy when I found you and brought you home ? And when my wife served you supper, why did you smile and grow brighter from that moment ? And then, when the gentleman came to order the boots, you smiled a second time, and from then on were brighter still. And just now, when the woman came with the girls, you smiled a third time, and were all bathed in bright light. Tell me, Michael, how does it happen that you give off such a light ? And why you smiled three times ? "

And Michael said : " The light shines out because I was punished, and now God has forgiven me. And I smiled the third time because I had to understand three words of God. And I did understand the words of God : the first word I understood when your wife took pity on me, and so I smiled the first time. The second word I understood when the rich man ordered the boots, and so I smiled the second time ; and just now, when I saw the girls, I understood the last, the third word, and I smiled a third time."

Then Semyon said : " Tell me, Michael, why did God punish you, and what are the words of God, that I may know them ? "

And Michael said : " God punished me because I was disobedient to Him. I was an angel in heaven, and was disobedient to God.

" I was an angel in Heaven, and the Lord sent me to Earth to take a woman's soul away. And I flew down here to Earth, and lo ! the woman lay alone, sick ; she

had borne twins, two little girls. The children were kicking by the mother's side, and the mother could not take them to her breast. The woman saw me, and knew that God had sent me to take her soul, and she wept and said : ' Angel of God, they have just buried my husband ; he was struck down by a tree in the forest. I have no sister, no aunt, no grandmother, not a soul to bring up my orphans. Do not take my poor soul ; let me suckle my children alone, bring them up and set them on their feet. After all, the children cannot live without father and mother.' I hearkened to the woman, and put one girl to her breast, and laid the other in the mother's arm, and went up to the Lord in Heaven. And when I flew to the Lord, I said : ' I could not take the woman's soul. The father was killed by a tree ; the mother has borne twins, and beseeches me not to take her soul, saying, " Let me suckle the children, bring them up, set them on their feet. The children cannot live without father and mother." ' Then the Lord said : ' Go back and take the woman's soul, and you will understand three words : you will understand what is in men ; and what is not given to men ; and what men live by. When you have understood that, then come back to Heaven.' And I flew back, down to Earth, and took the woman's soul.

" The children fell from her breast ; the lifeless body sank heavily on the cot, crushing one, and twisting its foot. I flew upward over the cottages of the village to bring the soul back to God, when a storm seized me, my wings sank down feebly and fell off, and the soul rose to God alone. But I went down to Earth, and lay by the side of the road."

XI

Now Semyon and Matryona realized whom they had clothed and fed, and who their guest had been, and they.

wept with fear and joy. But the angel said : " I lay alone in the field, and naked. I had never known man's troubles, neither cold nor hunger, and now I was a man. Hunger and cold tormented me, and I did not know what to do. Then I saw a chapel in the field, built to God. I went to the chapel of God to find shelter there. The chapel was locked, and I could not get in. So I sat down behind the chapel to shelter against the wind. Evening came, hunger tormented me, I was stiff with cold, and my whole body was one great pain. Suddenly I heard something : a man was coming along the path, wearing boots and talking to himself. And I saw the mortal face of a man for the first time since I had become a man myself. And this face filled me with terror, and I turned away. And I heard the man talking to himself about how he might protect his body from the cold of winter, and how he could find bread for wife and child. Then I thought, I am perishing with cold and hunger, and the man coming there is thinking only of where he can get the sheepskin to wrap himself and his wife in, and bread to eat. He will not be able to help me. The man saw me, frowned, grew still more terrible, and passed by. And I was in utter despair. Suddenly I heard the man coming back. I looked up, and hardly recognized him for the same man. First there had been death in his features, and now suddenly he had come alive, and in his countenance I recognized God. He came to me, clothed me, took me with him, and led me home. I went into his house, and his wife met us, and began to speak. The woman was yet more terrible than the man. The wind of death came from her mouth, and I could not breathe for the mouldy smell of death. She wanted to turn me out into the cold, and I knew she must die if she turned me out. Then her husband reminded her of God, and suddenly she was a different woman. And when she gave us supper, and looked at me,

I looked at her : death had left her, she was alive, and in her too I saw the Lord.

"Then I remembered the first word of God : ' You will understand what lives in men.' And I understood that love lives in men. And I was filled with joy because God had already begun to reveal to me what He had promised, and I smiled the first time. But I could not yet understand everything. I could not understand what is not given to men, and what men live by.

"I stayed with you a whole year. Then came the man who ordered the boots, the boots that were to wear a year without tearing or growing crooked. I looked at him and suddenly saw behind his shoulders my companion, the angel of death. No one except me saw the angel, but I knew him, and knew that before the sun had set the rich man's soul would be taken from him. And I thought, man prepares for a year ahead, and does not know that his life will end before evening. Then I remembered the second word of the Lord : You will understand what is not given to men.

"What is in men I already understood ; now I understood what is not given to men. It is not given to men to know what they need for their lives. Then I smiled the second time. I was glad, because I had seen the angel, my companion, and because God had revealed the second word to me.

"But still I could not understand everything. I could not yet understand what men live by.

"And I stayed with you, and waited for God to reveal the last word to me. Five years passed ; then came the girls, the twins with the woman, and I recognized the girls, and understood how the girls had stayed alive. I understood it, and thought, The mother begged on her children's behalf, and I believed her, and thought the children could not live without father and mother ; and now the stranger

woman has nursed them and brought them up. And when the woman shed tears of love for the children of strangers, I saw the living God in her, and understood what men live by. I understood that God had revealed the last word to me, and had forgiven me, and I smiled the third time."

XII

Then the garments fell off the angel's body, and he stood enwrapped in light so that the eye could not look upon him, and his voice grew greater, as if it came not from him but from Heaven, and the angel said: "I understood that every man lives not by care for his own self, but by love.

"It was not given to the mother to know what her children needed in order to live. It was not given to the rich man to know what he needed. And it is given to no man to know whether he will need boots to live in or shoes to be buried in before the day ends.

"I saved my mortal life, not by caring for my own wants, but because there was love in the wanderer on the path, and in his wife, and because she had love and pity for me. The orphans lived not because others tried to care for them, but because there was love in the heart of the stranger woman, and she had love and pity for them. And all men live, not because they care for themselves, but because there is love in men.

"I knew that God had given life to men, and that He wanted them to live. Now I understood something more.

"I understood that God did not want men to live each for himself, and so He did not reveal to them what each needs for himself; He wanted them to live in brotherhood, and so He revealed to them what they all need together, for themselves and for everyone.

“Now I understood that men only believe they live by caring for themselves ; but they live by love alone. He who lives in love lives in God, and God in him, for God is love.”

And the angel began to sing God's praises, and the house trembled at his voice. The ceiling opened, and a pillar of fire rose from earth into Heaven. And Semyon and his wife and his children sank down upon their knees, and wings unfolded upon the angel's back, and he rose upward to heaven.

When Semyon came to himself again, the cottage was as before, and no one was in the room but Semyon and his family.

